

## Binge Eating Disorder

Binge eating disorder (BED) is a condition where a person eats too much food, too quickly and often in response to an upsetting emotion. The person also feels they have lost control over their eating. How and what they eat may also change. A person with BED may eat:

- Faster than normal
- Until they are uncomfortably full
- When they are not hungry
- Alone due to embarrassment or shame

A person may binge on foods they are trying to avoid for weight control.

### Diagnosing BED

BED is the most common eating disorder. It affects 1 to 3 out of every 100 people in the United States. It is more common among people trying to lose weight compared to those who are not.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders defines BED as binge eating episodes that:

- Happen at least 1 time a week for 3 months
- Cause distress or worsens a person's quality of life
- Are not combined with other eating disorder behaviors (such as forcing yourself to vomit, exercising too much, misusing laxatives or diuretics)

### Other related problems

BED is linked to many weight-related medical problems such as:

- Diabetes
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Back and/or neck pain
- Chronic headaches
- Other chronic pain, breathing and digestive diseases

*If you have any questions, ask your care team.*

## Common triggers

A BED trigger is something that sets off a person's desire to binge eat. For people with BED, common triggers include:

- Not eating enough and feeling very hungry
- Breaking a diet rule
- Drinking alcohol or using cannabis (marijuana)
- Feeling down, anxious or other unpleasant emotions
- Unstructured time (having free time)
- Being alone
- Feeling "fat"
- Gaining weight
- Premenstrual tension
- Perfectionistic thinking

## Help yourself curb binge eating

### 1. *Monitor yourself for patterns in your eating habits*

Find your emotional and environmental triggers for binge eating.

- **Keep track** of what you are eating and drinking. Take note of when and where you eat. Look at the situation and context (why you are eating). Try to find possible factors that might be trigger you to binge eat.

### 2. *Create a regular, planned pattern of eating*

- **Plan ahead.** Set up 3 planned meals and 2 to 3 planned snacks each day. A planned pattern of eating should take priority over other activities. Ensure that your planned meals and snacks include enough calories to keep you satisfied throughout the day. The goal here is not necessarily weight loss, instead it is to teach your body that it will reliably get nutrients in throughout the day.
- **Avoid skipping meals.** Do not go longer than 3 to 4 hours without eating.
- **Avoid graze eating.** Do not eat anything more than your planned meals and snacks.
- **Do not try to eat less or restrict your eating to make up for binge eating.** If a binge happens, learn from the experience and recommit to your plan. Do not limit or starve yourself if you binge eat.

### 3. *Change your environment*

- **Limit high-risk foods.** Keep foods that cause you to binge eat out of the home or out of sight (for example in a hard-to-reach cabinet, behind other food containers, in the garage or basement).
- **Stock healthy food options.** Make sure you have these at home, work or wherever you spend time. These foods often look like fruits, vegetables and lean proteins.

- **Eat only in certain places in your home.** Do not eat anywhere else at home, except in designated areas like the kitchen.
- **Eat mindfully.** Pay attention to what you eat. Do not occupy yourself with other activities while eating like watching TV, driving or working.

#### **4. Find and use other activities when you want to binge**

- **Create a healthy distraction.** Find active hobbies that are consistent with your goals and values, and realistic. Choose activities that will not allow you to eat while you do them.
- **Observe the craving.** You can also choose to observe the craving or desire to eat. Watch how it changes over time, and see it go away on its own.

#### **5. Practice problem solving**

- **Face your problems early.** Create healthy strategies to deal with any issues or stressors that may cause you to binge eat.
  - Express your point of view with loved ones in a way that is clear and respectful.
  - Try not to procrastinate or put things off. Break big jobs into small doable tasks.
  - Get treatment for depression or anxiety if you need to.

#### **6. Review your progress and change your plan as needed**

- **Schedule an appointment, as needed.** Meet with a mental health professional if you need more support. If you notice that you are binge eating more, talk with your care team. They will help you find treatment that may work for you.

Your care team is here to support you on your weight loss journey. If you have any other questions about binge eating disorder, please ask your physician.