

What is Binge Eating?

BINGE EATING DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA¹

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating. This means:
 - Eating an amount of food that is definitely larger than most people would eat in a similar circumstance.
 - A sense of lack of control over eating during the episode.
- The binge-eating episodes are associated with three (or more):
 - Eating much more rapidly than normal.
 - Eating until feeling uncomfortably full.
 - Eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry.
 - Eating alone because of feeling embarrassed by how much one is eating.
 - Feeling disgusted with oneself, depressed, or very guilty afterwards.
- Distress regarding binge eating is present.
- The binge eating occurs, on average, at least 1x/week for 3 months.
- The binge eating is not associated with the recurrent use of inappropriate compensatory behavior (e.g., purging) and does not occur exclusively during the course of another eating disorder.

HOW COMMON IS BINGE EATING DISORDER?

General population	2-3% ²
Weight loss treatment-seeking adults	30% ³
Bariatric surgery population	27% lifetime history and 16% current ⁴

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3. de Zwaan M. Binge eating disorder and obesity. *Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord*. 2001 May;25 Suppl 1:S51-5. doi: 10.1038/sj.ijo.0801699. PMID: 11466589.
4. Kalarchian, M.A., Marcus, M.D., Levine, M.D., et al. (2007) Psychiatric Disorders among Bariatric Surgery Candidates: Relationship to Obesity and Functional Health Status. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 164, 328-334. <https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.2007.164.2.328>

FOOD ADDICTION

Is Eating an Addiction?



SYMPTOMS / BEHAVIORS

- Feeling out of control
- Hiding the behavior or lying
- Feeling distress

BRAIN CHANGES

Similar to substance use disorders, highly palatable foods trigger increased dopamine in the brain.¹

PERSONALITIES

We also see similar personality features across addictive behaviors such as impulsivity and novelty seeking.^{2,3}

WHAT DO BINGE EATERS SAY?

- I just can't stop.
- I would not do this if other people were around.
- I hide the evidence.
- I spend a lot of time thinking about food.
- I eat even though it is dangerous (in the car, even though I have medical conditions).
- I avoid activities with others because of eating or how I look or feel after a binge.
- I procrastinate doing what I need to do by binge eating.
- I have repeatedly tried to stop.
- I am able to eat more than I used to eat.
- I have cravings.

ADDICTED TO WHAT?

- An ingredient (sugar)
- All food?
- The behavior of eating?
- The taste?
- The numbing of emotions?
- The zoning out?

Unlike substances, we can't just stop eating. We need food to live. But -- Can we stop eating certain things? Can we stop eating for anything other than hunger and fuel?

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2. Giel KE, Teufel M, Junne F, Zipfel S, Schag K. Food-Related Impulsivity in Obesity and Binge Eating Disorder-A Systematic Update of the Evidence. Nutrients. 2017 Oct 27;9(11):1170. doi: 10.3390/nu9111170. PMID: 29077027; PMCID: PMC5707642.
3. Dalle Grave R, Calugi S, Marchesini G, Beck-Peccoz P, Bosello O, Compare A, Cuzzolaro M, Grossi E, Mannucci E, Molinari E, Tomasi F, Melchionda N; QUOVADIS II Study Group. Personality features of obese women in relation to binge eating and night eating. Psychiatry Res. 2013 May 15;207(1-2):86-91. doi: 10.1016/j.psychres.2012.09.001. Epub 2012 Sep 25. PMID: 23017653.

AM I FOOD "ADDICTED?"

According to the DSM, the diagnostic criteria for substance use¹ disorder is described below. In order to be diagnosed, one must meet 2 or more criteria within a 12-month period. Further classifications include: mild: 2-3 symptoms; moderate 4-5 symptoms; and severe: 6 or more symptoms. While the DSM recognizes gambling as an addiction, there is still not an expert consensus regarding other behavioral addictions such as shopping, internet, sex, or eating. What do you think? Can specific food be a physical addiction? Can eating be a behavioral addiction?

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA	YES/NO	MY EXAMPLE
Hazardous use: Use of the substance in ways that are dangerous to yourself and/or others.		
Social or interpersonal problems related to use.		
Neglect major roles (work, school, home, etc.) to use.		
Withdrawal: Experience withdrawal symptoms when stop using.		
Tolerance: You have to use more to get the same effect.		
Use larger amounts or use the substance for longer amounts of time.		
Repeated attempts to control use or quit but haven't been successful.		
Much time is spent using.		
Physical or psychological problems related to use.		
Activities (enjoyable or otherwise) given up to use.		
Cravings to use.		

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www.everyBodyBehavioralHealth.com

info@everyBodyBehavioralHealth.com

619.825.0499

