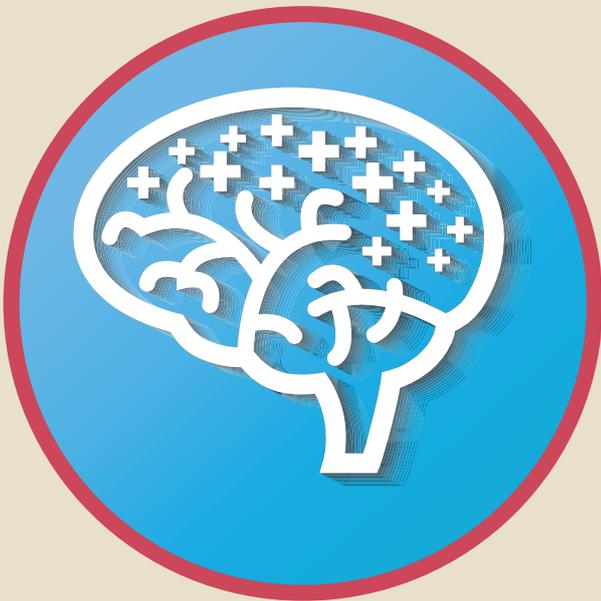


Binge Eating



Binge Eating Disorder/Compulsive Overeating

Introduction

Binge eating means eating large amounts of food in a short time. A person with binge eating disorder binges regularly for several months. When you binge, you feel like you can't control your eating, and you feel unhappy about it afterward.

Binge eating disorder is not the same thing as bulimia. Unlike bulimia, if you have binge eating disorder, you don't vomit or try other ways to get rid of calories. But you might try to limit how much food you eat between binges. Binge eating disorder is sometimes called compulsive overeating.

Some people who binge have a normal weight. But over time, many people who have binge eating disorder gain weight and have problems from being obese. People with binge eating disorder also often have depression, anxiety, or other emotional problems.

Having an eating disorder is not a sign of weakness or a character flaw. And it is not something you can overcome with just willpower. Many people struggle with eating disorders for a long time. Some people try to keep it a secret or deny that they have a problem.

In most cases, you will need treatment to get better. If you have binge eating disorder, treatment can prevent health problems, help you feel better about yourself, and improve the quality of your life.

Overview and Facts

Binge eating disorder most often starts in the late teens or the young-adult years. It is more common in women than men. Binge eating disorder affects 2.0% of men and 3.5% of women worldwide and experts estimate that 25 out of 100 people who are obese have it.

Binge eating disorder can be triggered by dieting, depression, or anxiety. It can even start because of boredom or stress, which is then relieved by bingeing.

Symptoms

From time to time, most of us feel like we have eaten more than we should. But eating too much every now and then does not mean that you have binge eating disorder. If you have binge eating disorder, you may:

- Eat way too much in a short period of time (less than 2 hours) on a regular basis.
- Eat when you are not hungry, to ease stress or to comfort yourself.
- Eat for emotional reasons, such as being sad, angry, lonely, or bored.
- Feel like you can't stop eating.
- Eat faster than normal when you binge.
- Eat so much that you feel painfully full.
- Feel unhappy, upset, guilty, or depressed after you binge.
- Eat alone because you are embarrassed about how much you eat.

Even if you don't have all the symptoms of binge eating disorder, having even a few symptoms can be a sign of a problem that needs treatment. It is important to get help right away if you or someone you know has any of these symptoms.

Consult a doctor if:

- You feel like you have symptoms of an eating disorder.
- You suspect a family member or friend has an eating disorder, talk with them about the problem.

The sooner you get medical and psychological treatment, the faster you will be on your way to recovery.

Causes and Risk Factors

Experts are not sure what causes binge eating disorder, but it seems to run in families.

Experts think that cultural attitudes about body shape and weight also play a role.

Anxiety, depression, or stress can cause some people to binge.

Your risk for binge eating increases if:

- You or your parents are overweight.
- You are a perfectionist. This means that you feel like you have to do everything exactly right all the time.
- You have a poor body image, which means that you don't like the way your body looks.
- You live in a culture that values being thin.

Test and Diagnosis

To diagnose an eating disorder, a person should consult a mental health professional who will rely on scientific criteria to check whether he/she has an eating disorder.

A doctor can find out if you have binge eating disorder by doing a physical exam and asking questions about your eating habits and past health. Your doctor may also ask questions about your mental health and how you feel about food and the shape of your body.

Your doctor may ask questions about how you feel. It is common for a treatable mental health problem such as depression or anxiety to play a part in an eating disorder.

Treatment

The main treatments for binge eating disorder are a combination of:

- Psychotherapy/ Cognitive behavioral therapy which helps by identifying and replacing inaccurate thoughts to help change behavior and emotional state.
- Medication such as antidepressants in case the person is depressed or anxious.
- Nutritional therapy.

You may need treatment for a long time to fully recover. You also may need treatment for other problems that often occur with binge eating disorder. These can include depression, obesity, or problems with being overweight.

The sooner treatment is started, the better. Getting treatment early can make recovery easier and prevent serious health problems.

If left untreated, eating disorders can lead to serious illness and even death.

Sources and Links

www.idraac.org

www.webmd.com