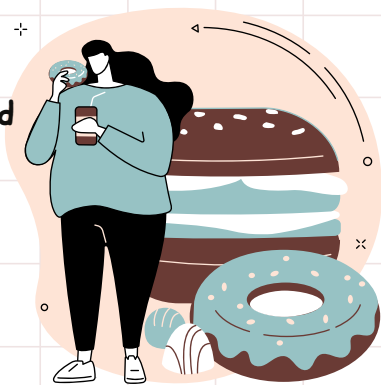


Binge Eating Disorder (BED)

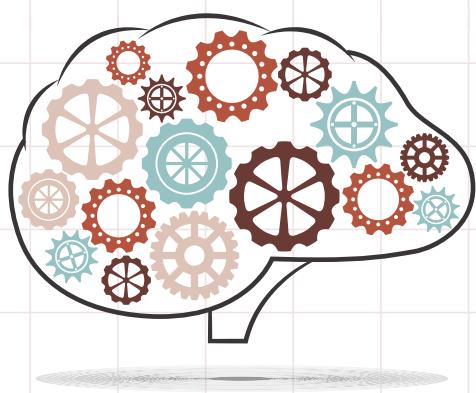
What is it?

Binge Eating Disorder is an eating disorder characterised by frequent binge eating without compensatory behaviours (e.g., purging). Binge eating involves eating a large amount of food in a short period of time and a sense of losing control over eating. Binge eating is accompanied by feelings of guilt and shame. Eating alone or in secret is common.



What causes BED?

BED is a serious mental illness. There is no single cause and the factors can vary from person to person. Some of the known factors include genetic predisposition, environmental, cultural and social factors (e.g., the thin ideal or diet centric cultures). Individual factors and a history of trauma can also make someone more susceptible to developing BED.



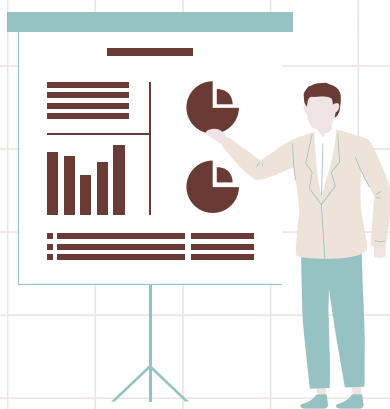
Who has BED?

BED is the most common eating disorder, with 47% of people with an eating disorder suffering from BED. It is also the only eating disorder that affects almost an equal number of males and females.



Facts about BED

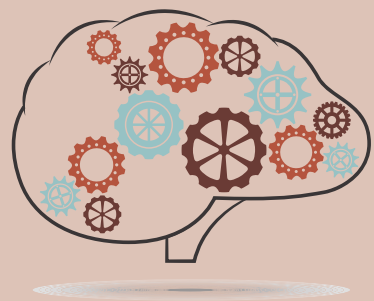
Contrary to common misconceptions, BED like most EDs has a significant element of restriction and deprivation (physical or psychological) associated with it. These are often important triggers of binge eating episodes. Body image dissatisfaction, preoccupation with appearance, weight and shape, low self-esteem and low self-worth are common. Some people with BED may experience weight gain and be in a larger body. Difficulties with managing emotions are common as are experiences of shame, guilt, depression & anxiety.



Treatment for BED

The most effective treatments for BED include therapy. The most common therapeutic approach is called Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Eating Disorders. The focus is on understanding triggers for binge eating, eating regularly, addressing the person's relationship with food and potentially movement, changing unhelpful thoughts, working on learning different ways to cope with emotions and improving overall well-being.





BINGE Eating



Binge eating is a common experience amongst individuals with eating disorders (Binge Eating Disorder as well as Bulimia Nervosa and in some instances Anorexia Nervosa). Many individuals with restrictive eating disorders end up binge eating at some point. Binge eating is also common for individuals with disordered eating or dieting behaviour.

WHAT IS BINGE EATING?

Binge eating is characterised by eating a large amount of food in a short period of time and strongly associated with a sense of loss of control over eating. Contrary to popular belief, binge eating is not the same as "over-eating" or "indulging" in food, both of which are part of normal eating. Urges to eat large amounts of foods is accompanied by strong feelings of shame and guilt. Eating usually occurs past the point of fullness. Binge eating is distressing and can have a significant impact on someone's life, their functioning, their relationships and overall well-being.

WHAT CAUSES BINGE EATING?

There is no single cause of binge eating. Risk factors for binge eating include dieting, deprivation, food insecurity, trauma and unmet needs. Dieting usually involves restricting food intake, which leads to psychological deprivation and hunger. This activates the survival response which is beyond control. The brain/body cannot tell the difference between intentional restriction and famine, therefore leading to a natural response to eat and replenish. Psychological deprivation refers to depriving the body of foods it likes/wants based on a rule or thought (e.g., I shouldn't eat sugar). When food rules are inevitably broken, this can trigger binge eating. Food insecurity (not having secure access to food which is not by choice) can also contribute to binge eating that has nothing to do with weight/shape and appearance. Experience of trauma places an individual at risk of binge eating as a way of coping/escaping overwhelming emotions. Emotional, physical, social needs that remain unmet can lead to binge eating for some individuals.

COMMON TRIGGERS FOR BINGE EATING

- Physical hunger (not eating enough, restricting food intake, diets)
- Psychological deprivation (rules around food, not allowing yourself to eat foods you like)
- Breaking dietary rules
- Being in a position where you may have less control over your behaviour (e.g., when intoxicated)
- Adverse or difficult events/emotions

Strategies for MANAGING BINGE EATING

Healing your relationship
with food



Know your triggers

In learning to manage or reduce binge eating episodes, it is helpful to understand and identify what leads to binge eating for you. What are your triggers? Knowing this helps you to know how to address it.

Manage your urges

Once you know your triggers and you become aware of the urge to binge eat, it is helpful to:

- Urge surf (learn to ride the urge wave, until it subsides - all urges subside at some point).
- 3 D's - **Delay** engaging in behaviour (set a timer), **Distract** during delay, then **Decide** what to do next (delay again or act on urge).

Soothe your feelings

Develop a self-soothing tool kit that you can 'go to' when you need some comfort or soothing. Consider activities that you might find soothing using all of your senses (for example, listening to soothing music, look at pictures you like, cuddle a pet). This may take some practice. Learning to be aware of feelings and needs can be hard but important in changing your relationship with food.

Eat regularly & stop dieting behaviours

One of the most helpful ways to reducing binge eating caused by physical hunger is to eat regularly (every 3 hours, 5-6 times per day). Slowing down or normalising your pace of eating helps too. Where possible, formalise your meals (e.g., serve it on a plate, don't eat out of packets). Slowly letting go of food rules and dieting behaviour - bit by bit, stopping the dieting altogether.

Practice self-compassion

Self-compassion includes being kind, gentle and compassionate with ourselves when we feel poorly about ourselves. Speaking to yourself gently when you've binged, felt shame or guilt can help. Consider some kind things you can say to yourself during these times.

Challenge your thoughts

One useful strategy is to identify unhelpful thoughts and challenge them (that is, rationalise them). If you notice any 'black or white' type of thinking, consider the shades of grey (e.g., "I've had one biscuit, I might as well eat the pack). What might be a more useful way to think about this situation?