

Binge Eating Disorder: Uncommonly Discussed

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It is a condition typically discussed in a whisper, but after extensive research, this all too commonly occurring condition has now been formally recognized. Binge Eating Disorder (BED), the most common of the eating disorders, is a debilitating and often hidden condition.

BED is specifically defined as:

- Regular and uncontrollable consumption of large amounts of food within a brief period of time.
- Eating quantities that lead to feeling uncomfortably full, eating rapidly and not due to hunger, eating in secrecy, and having feelings of disgust and guilt.
- Binges occur at least once a week for 3 months.

BED is a condition that will not likely be discussed with a health care provider. The patient feels shame and alienation, and has become skillful at hiding their condition. Unfortunately, most health care providers have limited education regarding BED. This can lead to many individuals having been left undiagnosed and untreated, and therefore unable to obtain remission.

BED affects women twice as often as men with an estimated 2.8 million individuals suffering from this condition.

The most common ages of onset are in the 20's, but children can also suffer with BED, leading to nearly certain obesity as an adult. In fact, the roots of BED are most often found in childhood; through eating habits that are learned, used to soothe, or to deal with stress. BED crosses all ethnic groups and occurs in normal-weight, overweight, and obese individuals. Secondary concerns associated with BED include a variety of physical and mental health concerns, health care costs, and decreased activity and productivity.

The underlying cause(s) of BED remain as of yet unknown, but a combination of factors are likely involved; genes, emotional states, and learned behaviors. In addition, serotonin, a brain neurotransmitter associated with compulsions, may be a contributing factor.

Risk factors of BED are as follows:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Family history of eating disorders
- Extensive history of dieting
- Elevated stress
- Poor self and body image
- Limited social involvement

Treatment options are often successful and can include self-initiated strategies, nutritional counseling, psychotherapy, and medication. Substantial positive changes can be made by staying active, avoiding isolation, developing new interests, resisting dieting, eating regularly spaced meals, utilizing the

support of understanding family and friends, and identifying triggers that set binge eating into motion. In addition, psychotherapy can lead to remission when other avenues fail. In cases of moderate to severe BED, medications recently FDA approved have shown promising success. However, the most important factor in the treatment of BED is identification, and is often the greatest obstacle in overcoming this debilitating disorder.

To learn more about BED and how to overcome it please visit the following websites:

www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

www.bedonline.com