Binge Eating

Binge eating is when you eat a large amount of food in a short amount of time and feel that you cannot control what or how much you are eating. If you binge eat regularly—at least once a week for 3 months—and feel you cannot control your eating, you may have binge eating disorder.

It is normal to overeat now and then, but if your overeating feels out of control, talk to your primary care or mental health provider about treatment.

Signs of binge eating disorder

- You eat until you feel uncomfortably full.
- You eat large amounts of food when you are not hungry.
- You eat faster than normal.
- You eat alone because you are embarrassed over the amount of food you eat.
- You feel disgusted, depressed, ashamed or guilty after overeating.
- You binge eat regularly - at least once a week for three months.
- You eat a larger amount of food than normal during a short time frame, such as two hours.
- You cannot stop eating or control what or how much you are eating.
- You feel distress over your binge eating.
- Your binge eating does not occur with purging (vomiting), excessive exercise, laxative use or other behaviors caused by eating disorders, like bulimia nervosa or anorexia nervosa.

When to see your provider

If you have signs of binge eating disorder, see your primary care or mental health provider as soon as possible. Talk to your provider about your signs and feelings.

Treatment options

Your provider will talk to you about options for treatment, which may include:

- Individual, group or family therapy.
- Medicines, such as lisdexamfetamine (brand name Vyvanse), antidepressants and certain anticonvulsants.
- Nutrition counseling.
- Medically supervised weight management program in combination with other treatments.
If you are about to have or have had weight loss surgery:

Work with your health care team to address binge eating both before and after weight loss surgery. Food portions are small after weight loss surgery. If you regularly experience binge eating, adjusting to these portions can cause added mental stress.

We encourage you to:

- Talk to your weight management team about loss of control eating.
- Call Comprehensive Weight Management, Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery at 614-366-6675 for information about support groups and nonsurgical weight management programs at Ohio State or visit [https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/weight-management](https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/weight-management) for more information.

Some ways to begin to change binge eating

With the support of your provider, use these tips to help you with occasional binge eating.

- Look for patterns with your binge eating. Is there a certain time of day or place they occur? Do your emotions or certain situations trigger binge eating?
- Make a list of the emotions that seem to trigger binge eating. Do any of these words describe how you feel?
  - Bored
  - Sad
  - Angry
  - Frustrated
  - Lonely
  - Anxious
  - Stressed
  - Scared
  - Other: ______________

- Make sure food isn’t your only source of pleasure. What do you wish you had more time to do? What makes you smile or laugh on a regular basis? What helps you lose track of time and enjoy life? Schedule things you enjoy in your week.
- Create a list of non-food related things to do to help distract you or replace eating when you are tempted to binge. Ideas:
  - Take a 5 minute walk.
  - Call a friend.
  - Listen to favorite song.
  - Read.
  - Watch a funny video.
  - Deep breathe, meditate or pray.
  - Other: _______________________________________________________________.


• Keep a record of your eating patterns to gain insight. Write down not only what and when you eat, but also your thoughts and feelings. Also, keep track of when you take part in non-food pleasure. Look for websites and mobile apps to help you track information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Food and Drink (list amounts)</th>
<th>Emotions / Situations, such as stressed from work meeting, bored at home, etc.</th>
<th>Thoughts, such as “I deserve this”</th>
<th>Non-Food Pleasure, such as went for 5 minute walk, got a massage, etc.</th>
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• If you see patterns to when you binge, create a healthy habit or ritual to replace it.

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<tr>
<th>Old Pattern</th>
<th>New Habit or Ritual</th>
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<tr>
<td>I binge on chips while watching TV at night.</td>
<td>I will make a cup of my favorite peppermint tea to drink while watching TV.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I overeat candy while sitting at my desk after attending stressful staff meetings.</td>
<td>I will schedule a 5 minute walk after stressful meetings and listen to my favorite music.</td>
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• Make it hard to overeat foods by keeping work and home as supportive as possible. For example:
  • Don’t bring foods you crave into your home or work.
  • Drive home a different way to avoid fast food stops.
  • Stay out of your kitchen between planned meals and snacks.
  • Keep tempting foods “out of sight and out of mind”. Store them in an inconvenient place, such as a top shelf or in a freezer. Reorganize food stored in your refrigerator and pantry to have healthier foods at eye level.
  • Portion out foods ahead of time, especially foods you may overeat, such as chips and candy, to limit the amount you eat.
  • Prepare healthier snacks and have them ready to eat at home, at work or in the car.
  • Other ideas:
    ________________________________________________________________________
    ________________________________________________________________________
    ________________________________________________________________________

• Plan your meals and eat on a regular schedule. Binge eating sometimes occurs as a result of becoming too hungry, so be sure to eat a meal or snack every 3 to 5 hours. Talk to a dietitian if you need help with this.

• Keep a regular sleep schedule. Too much or too little sleep affects appetite. Junk food is more tempting when you lack sleep and eating too much food late at night can affect your sleep.

• “Manage your energy, not your time.” When you struggle under the weight of your to do list, stop and think about a better way to manage your energy. Prioritize your day’s to do list and make sure you are setting realistic goals. Learn to be flexible and see the value in short breaks. Prioritize your self-care by getting enough sleep, eating well and doing things you enjoy. This will sustain you as you tackle today’s tasks.

• Stop before you act. If you find yourself looking for food, but are not physically hungry, slow down and look at a clock. Tell yourself that you will wait at least 10 minutes before you eat. It might help to tell yourself “I can eat what I want then, but for now I am going to wait it out until my clock says ______”. While you are waiting, do other activities that you enjoy, such as check social media, call a friend or watch TV. You might also want to consider why you want to eat and ask yourself “Will eating this make this situation better?” or “How will things change if I allow myself to eat this food?”. If after the set time, you decide to allow yourself to eat, or to even binge, decide what and how much you will eat. Record this in your eating pattern table. This strategy may help you slow down the process of overeating and increase your control. It might also help you build skills to delay gratification and avoid binge eating.

• Listen to your hunger levels. On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 = beyond hungry and 10 = beyond full, eat when you feel slightly hungry (level 4) and stop when you are satisfied (level 7). Become aware of eating for reasons other than hunger, such as stress. See the handout, “Mindful Eating” at https://patienteducation.osumc.edu/Documents/MindfulEating.pdf, for more information. You can also use a 1 to 10 taste scale to notice how much you enjoy each bite where 1 = tasted terrible and did not enjoy and 10 = loved the taste. By using scales to rate your hunger and eating experience, you can create points of active decision making and increase your awareness of your eating choices.
• Stop multitasking while eating. Avoid eating in front of the TV, phone or computer screen. Be in the moment when you are eating. Notice taste and portions. Eat slowly and savor each bite.

• Ask for help:
  † Who in your life can you reach out to for support? ____________________________________________________________

  † What other resources might help you? ____________________________________________________________

• Take a moment and make a plan to quit binge eating right now:
  † The first step that I will take in order to address my binge eating is to ____________________________________________________________

  † I will take this step by this date: ____________________________________________________________.

  † This is important to me because ____________________________________________________________

If you need help developing a plan of action or to find more resources, talk to your provider or contact Comprehensive Weight Management at 614-366-6675.

For more information, please visit these websites

• Ohio State’s Weight Management Program, https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/weight-management/weight-management-nonsurgical

• Ohio State’s Harding Hospital, https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/mental-behavioral/eating-disorders

• OSU Couple and Family Therapy Clinic, https://cftc.ehe.osu.edu/

• The Center for Balanced Living, http://www.centerforbalancedliving.org/

• Academy for Eating Disorders, http://www.aedweb.org/

• Binge Eating Disorder Association, http://bedaonline.com/

• National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/


• Overeaters Anonymous, https://oa.org/

• Womenshealth.gov, https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/binge-eating-disorder

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.