



Overview

Bulimia is characterised by a recurrent binge-eating episode followed by a compensatory behaviour such as self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics, enemas and other medications, fasting and over exercising. A binge-eating episode involves consuming a large amount of food in a short period of time, whilst also experience a sense of loss of control followed by immediate feelings of guilt.

Bulimia is characterised by the following symptoms

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating an episode of binge eating is characterized by both of the following:
 - Eating in a discrete period of time an amount of food that is definitely larger than most people would eat during a similar period of time and under similar circumstances
 - A sense of lack of control over eating during the episode (e.g., a feeling that one cannot stop eating or control what or how much one is eating)
- Recurrent inappropriate compensatory behavior in order to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting; misuse of laxatives, diuretics, enemas, or other medications; fasting; or excessive exercise.
- The binge eating and inappropriate compensatory behaviors both occur, on average, at least twice a week for 3 months.
- Self-evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape and weight.
- The disturbance does not occur exclusively during episodes of Anorexia Nervosa.

There are two sub types of Bulimia Nervosa:

Purging Type: the individual has regularly engaged in self-induced vomiting or the misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or enemas

Nonpurging Type: the individual has used other inappropriate compensatory behaviors, such as fasting or excessive exercise, but has not regularly engaged in self-induced vomiting or the misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or enemas

Individuals with Bulimia Nervosa are typically within the normal healthy weight range, although some may be slightly underweight or overweight.

Physical warning signs of Bulimia Nervosa

- Broadening of the jaw line due to swollen salivary glands
- Excessive exercise routine
- Discoloration of teeth
- Calluses on the back of the hands and knuckles from self induced vomiting
- Frequent weight changes

Behavioural warning signs of Bulimia Nervosa

- Disappearance of large amounts of food or the existence of wrappers and containers.
- Using the bathroom frequently after meals
- Signs of smells of vomiting, presence of wrappers or packages of laxatives or diuretics
- Shoplifting or abnormal amount of money spend on food.
- Food missing from the house

Psychological warning signs of Bulimia Nervosa

- Low self esteem
- Reacting to emotional stress by overeating
- Obsessive about food, weight and shape
- Distortion of body weight
- Depression, anxiety and irritability
- Feeling deeply out of control



- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Insomnia and lethargy
- Substance abuse or self injury
- Feeling guilty or ashamed after eating
- Overly judgmental of themselves and/or others
- Difficulty expressing emotion through language
- Fear of criticism
- Uncontrollable urges to eat vast amount of food

Complications

- Fluid and Electrolyte disturbance
- Significant and permanent loss of dental enamel resulting in chipped teeth
- Clammy hands and tremors
- Anxiety and heart palpitations
- Risk of osteoporosis
- Puffy skin under the eyes
- Menstrual irregularities or cessation of menstruation
- Inflammation and possible rupture of the esophagus from frequent vomiting.
- Chronic irregular bowel movements and constipation due to laxative abuse.

Where to go for help

It is important that if you believe you or someone you know has an eating disorder to seek professional assistance immediately. It can be scary and frightening to make this first step however the earlier help is sought the quicker the road to recovery.