

Bulimia Nervosa

What are the symptoms?

- Recurrent binge eating, experiencing a lack of control when eating and consuming more than most people would eat during a period of time.
- Action is taken to prevent weight gain e.g. vomiting, laxative misuse, enemas, diuretics, fasting and excessive exercise.
- The above symptoms occur at least twice a week and have persisted for at least three months.
- The persons' view of themselves is very much occupied by their body weight and shape.

There are two different subsets of Bulimia:

Purging Type

The person regularly vomits, misuses laxatives, diuretics or enemas.

Non-Purging Type

The person uses exercise or fasting behaviours to compensate for binges and does not regularly vomit, use enemas or laxatives.

In adolescent females the prevalence of Bulimia is between 1 - 3%. The prevalence in males is approximately one tenth of that in females. The disorder typically begins in late adolescence or early adulthood.

Bulimia and Your Health

- Vomiting leads to electrolyte disturbance, the disruption of potassium can have potentially lethal effects on your body as it regulates the heartbeat
- Swollen glands in your neck
- Frequent vomiting can rupture the Oesophagus
- Teeth can decay from the acid caused by vomiting

The Effect Of Laxative Abuse

Laxatives stimulate the colon. The colon does not play any role in the absorption of calories, it simply contains fibre which cannot be digested. The effect of a laxative is to remove water from the colon which in the short term creates the impression of weight loss on the scales, however, as soon as fluid is consumed the weight will return. If abusing laxatives, it is important to drink water as you may feel dizzy and faint.

What Are The Costs Of Laxative Abuse?

- The dehydration caused by laxative abuse can cause blurred vision, fainting spells and kidney damage
- Laxative abuse can prevent the natural bowel movement from occurring and a person may become dependent
- Laxative abuse can strip the protective muscles in the colon leaving you vulnerable to infection

Tips

- Don't let yourself get hungry. Eat something at regular intervals because hunger tends to trigger an urge to binge
- Don't deprive yourself of the foods you enjoy even if they are high in fat and calories. The more you deprive yourself the more you will crave them, making bingeing more likely.
- Do things that you enjoy, if you're feeling more fulfilled in your life you are less likely to seek comfort from the fridge
- Until you have your bingeing under control don't put temptation in your way, if ice cream triggers a binge don't put it in your freezer.
- If you feel the urge to binge, try to postpone it for 30 minutes. During this time think about what is bothering you and create an action plan of ways to set about improving the situation
- Avoid brushing your teeth after you have been sick, as this will rub the acid into your teeth and encourage tooth decay
- It is better to rinse your mouth with a non acidic mouthwash.
- Arrange regular dental checks to minimise any damage the acid from vomiting can do to your teeth.
- Imagine a future without Bulimia; what would you be doing?
- If you have been abusing laxatives, coming off them may cause difficulties with constipation at first. To help with this, increase your intake of fresh fruit and vegetables and try to include prunes and dried fruit

How we can help you

When you're referred to us we'll arrange an assessment appointment with you. We'll talk with you about your experiences and why you think your eating habits have changed.

Depending on your needs, we may offer a range of treatment options to support you.

Group Work

The therapeutic groups run by the service are for people with different eating disorders which can surprise some people. The purpose of these groups is to help you to explore what is behind your eating disorder and to help you to think about changes that may help you.

First Steps Group

This is a six-week group which provides you with support and a better understanding of the steps you will need to take to start your recovery from an eating disorder. It includes nutritional information, practical ideas and educational work about the psychological, medical and social impacts that an eating disorder has on your life, as well as those around you. The group explores what you are gaining from your eating disorder and what you might feel afraid of losing, in addition to thinking about what you may gain from changing your eating patterns.

Self Esteem Group

Our eight-week group sessions can help you understand how low self-esteem may have developed and how it's maintained. It's an opportunity to try out different ways of building your self-confidence and experiment with assertive behaviour to gain a more positive relationship with yourself.

The Day Programme

The day programme can be helpful for people who have recently been discharged from a hospital for their eating disorder, or for those who require more intensive help in managing their eating difficulties. This treatment includes a range of therapeutic groups such as Body Image, Self Esteem and Nutrition which are aimed to support you in addressing difficulties concerning your relationship with food, eating and your body. There are also structured, supported mealtimes and each member receives their own individualised set of treatment aims as part of their care plan.

Individual Therapy

One to one therapy is available. People are often in two minds about recovering from their eating disorder because it can feel that the disorder brings advantages as well as disadvantages; therapy will give you the opportunity to explore these concerns. The sessions are likely to focus upon what may have triggered your eating problems in the first place and exploring different ways of handling problems. One key area to this will be altering the patterns of eating that have led to your body becoming unwell.

Dietetic Support

Dietetic support can be useful for ensuring that you have accurate information about your body's dietary requirements. A Dietician also helps you to alter your eating patterns in a way that is most manageable for you.

What Lies Behind Eating Disorders?

Eating Disorders: A Biological Basis

Research suggests that there may be a biological basis for eating disorders, for example, those with a mother or sister who have an eating disorder are twelve times more likely to develop one themselves.

Personality And Eating Disorders

Perfectionism is a common trait in people with eating disorders. Often people with eating disorders have achieved a lot but do not recognise this, instead they tend to see themselves as worthless and inadequate. They tend to see things in 'black and white', or as either 'all good' or 'all bad'.

Other Factors That Are Sometimes Involved

The family – some people with eating disorders feel smothered by their families, others feel abandoned and not cared for. Often people with eating disorders have had rigid upbringings with high demands placed on them. To escape these pressures, people sometimes turn to food and define their self-worth by their weight.

Social pressures – very image conscious friends and romantic partners can create an environment that can encourage an eating disorder.

The media – the media is not always very helpful, as it tends to portray happy, successful people as young, slim and attractive.

Accessing our service

Following your assessment at our clinic, you and the Clinician will look at some of the options available so that the most suitable service for you can be found.

Hospital Admission

If your eating disorder has placed your health in severe danger, a hospital admission may be necessary. This is not often required but is vital for people with a very low body weight where weight gain is immediately necessary to ensure survival.

During your stay in hospital you will be given a diet plan designed by a Dietician to help you gain weight in a way that is manageable and safe for you.

Often during your first week you will be confined to bed rest to minimise the pressure you place on your body whilst you are so unwell, the duration of which will be determined by your rate of recovery. Your stay in hospital will involve regular weighing and possibly supervised meals to help with your return to health.

The Home Treatment Team

The Home Treatment Team is a community team providing visits to patients in their own homes and hospital settings across the whole of Berkshire.

If you are admitted to hospital, the team will provide support to both you and your family during this difficult time and will continue to work with you to find the most appropriate care once you have left hospital. If you are at home, the team can provide emotional support, meal support and therapeutic activities such as food shopping and cooking to support you in making changes to your eating habits as well as the aspects of daily living that are disrupted by your eating disorder.

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Further support

NHS

You can find more information about anorexia, and other eating disorders, including symptoms, causes and support, from the NHS website

[nhs.uk/conditions/anorexia/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anorexia/)

Women's Aid

Helpline for domestic violence. Can arrange contact with safe houses in your area - 0808 2000 247

Samaritans

Support for any issue - 08457 90 90 90 (24hr)

Talk to Frank

Advice & info on drug (mis)use - 0300 123 6600 (24hr)

Drinkline

Advice and help for alcohol (mis)use - 0300 123 1110

Marie Stopes

Abortion and pregnancy advice & counselling service – 0845 300 8090 (24hr)

Community Mental Health Teams

Bracknell 01344 823333

Newbury 01635 292020

Reading 0118 960 5612

Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team—0118 960 5999

Overnight crisis service – 0800 783 9505

Slough 01753 690950

Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead 01628 640200

Wokingham 0118 9890707

The CMHT can offer help in an immediate crisis

Urgent Care 0300 365 99 99 (24 hour line)

How to contact us

If you need to contact us
or require further information...

Reading: **0118 929 6417**

St Mark's Hospital: **01753 638883**

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk

