

INTRODUCTION

Eating disorders are serious mental health conditions that affect the way a person thinks about food, eating and their body [1].

Historically, eating disorders have been viewed as a "female disorder" [2].

Because of this, boys' experiences are sometimes overlooked. [3].

Eating disorders do not discriminate. They can affect anyone, including teenage boys, transgender boys and non-binary individuals assigned male at birth [4].

Binge eating disorder is the most common eating disorder in both boys and girls [5].

PREVALENCE

25% of individuals affected by an eating disorder are **MALE** [6].

Transgender and non-binary youth, are **4 times** more likely to experience eating disorders [8].

40%

40% of those affected by binge eating disorder are **MALE** [7].



SUPPORT CONTACTS



BEAT [24]

0808 801 0677
www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

"I've had great experiences using Beat's Helpline services. They have been very empathetic in my most challenging times."
BEAT Helpline User

YOUNGMINDS [25]

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Helpful information, real life stories and advice for parents

FIRST STEPS ED [26]

0300 1021685
www.firststepsed.co.uk/services-and-support/workshops/



Offers a Boys and Men workshop, providing a safe space to explore body image and EDs



SUPPORTING TEENAGE BOYS WITH BINGE EATING DISORDER

A Guide For Parents



DISCLAIMER:

Any research or evidence quoted is continuously advancing and any language used in this asset is not intended to stigmatise. If you're affected by anything in this resource, seek help from your GP and primary care team.

BOYS AND BINGE EATING DISORDER

- Binge Eating Disorder is characterised by regularly eating large amounts of food in a short period of time, without feeling in control.
- Someone may eat until feeling uncomfortably full or when they are not hungry.
- This is often done in secret and accompanied by distress, guilt or shame after the binge.
- Unlike bulimia, this is not followed by trying to get rid of the food afterwards, such as vomiting.
- Binges are very distressing for someone and is not a form of "overindulgence".
- If someone has at least one binge eating episode a week for 3 months, they may be diagnosed with Binge Eating Disorder [14].
- Binge Eating Disorder is not just about weight - it is a serious mental health condition [15].

WHY BOYS ARE OFTEN MISSED

- Boys may not recognise their behaviours are disordered so are less likely to seek help [16].
- Stereotypes about masculinity can make boys feel ashamed to speak up about their eating struggles or body image [17].

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR BINGE EATING DISORDER

While many eating disorders appear during early teenage years, binge eating disorder typically emerges in late adolescence, making it important for parents to look out for early signs and symptoms of the disorder [18].

1 BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS

- Buying lots of food
- Avoiding to eat around others
- Hoarding food
- Planning daily routines around binge eating
- Eating rapidly
- Eating until uncomfortably full
- Cancelling plans for binge episodes
- Irritability
- Withdrawing from social interactions

2 PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS

You may notice changes in the way someone **feels** before they show physical symptoms such as:

- Preoccupation with thinking about food
- Sense of losing control over eating or around food
- Feeling anxious or guilty about eating, especially around others
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence

3 PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Bloating
- Constipation
- Weight gain
- Stomach pain
- Problematic skin
- Trouble sleeping

BODY IMAGE AND BOYS



Body image is how we see and feel about our own body [9]. If a boy is unhappy with how he looks, it can increase his risk of developing an eating disorder.

Boys often feel pressured to be muscular, lean and strong [10].

When boys feel they don't meet these unrealistic ideals, this can lead to them having a poor body image [11].

This can drive unhealthy eating behaviours such as binge eating [12].

Boys may avoid talking about body issues due to the stigma or fear of seeming "weak" [13].



SUPPORT CONTACTS FOR PARENTS

You don't have to go through this alone. Support guides and groups for parents and carers can be incredibly helpful.

Kelty Eating Disorders [22]

Offers a comprehensive guide for parents, offering ideas and advice on how to support their children through the challenges of an eating disorder.

https://keltyeatingdisorders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/BCMHO26_EatingDisorder_FullGuide_v6-Web.pdf

Orri [23]

Offers fortnightly parent and carer support groups

<https://www.orri-uk.com/parent-and-carers-support-group/>

ADVICE FOR PARENTS

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR SON



- Reassure him that Binge Eating Disorder is a medical condition – not a failure or weakness.
- Create a non-judgemental space for him to talk about his feelings or concerns.
- Look for male friendly or male only support options.
- Challenge assumptions that only girls suffer with food or body image.
- Encourage him to express his emotions.
- Support healthy habits such as enjoyable physical activities.
- Be patient – recovery is a process that takes time.

TREATMENT

If you are concerned that your son may be struggling with binge eating, getting support early is important to ensure the best chance of recovery.

FIRST STEPS

- Start by booking a **GP appointment** to begin the process of getting your son the right support.
- If your GP isn't familiar with Binge Eating Disorder, don't be discouraged. You can refer them to National Treatment Guidelines (**NICE**) to help guide the conversation [19].

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

- The main approach to treating BED is through **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)** [20].
- This will help your son understand the thoughts and feelings behind his eating patterns and teach him healthier coping strategies.
- This can be done through guided self-help using CBT-based books with supplementary sessions or group or individual CBT sessions.

WHAT TREATMENT SHOULD NOT FOCUS ON

- Although weight changes may happen, treatment should never revolve around dieting or weight loss. **Restrictive dieting can actually make binge eating worse** [21].

Binge Eating Disorder is a serious condition, not just "eating too much" and your child deserves compassionate, expert help.



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