Binge Eating When Sad Can Be More Than a Simple Case of the Blues

by YVONNE BANKS

Depression and Binge Eating

Depression and binge eating are closely linked, some studies suggest. Depression seems to predispose people to eating disorders. Nearly half of all patients diagnosed with binge eating disorder have a history of depression.

Binge eating disorder is characterized by episodes of extreme overeating. The person feels he/she cannot control their eating problem. The binge eater sometimes strives to eat as little as possible in order to control their food consumption only to binge eat when they cave in.

Teens and young adults, especially women and girls, seem to have this eating disorder more frequently than the general population. It has become more apparent that binge eating and other eating disorders coexist with other psychological and/or medical issues. Low self-esteem, substance abuse, anxiety, and depression are the more common ones. It is not unusual for a person with an eating disorder to hide unhealthy behaviors from others. Often, it is difficult to recognize the signs of an eating disorder until later in the game.

Signs of Binge Eating Disorder

Common signs of this condition include:

- Continuously dieting without any apparent weight loss
- Wearing big clothes to hide their body
- Disappearance of large quantities of food in short time periods
- Many food wrappers and containers in trash or elsewhere
- Skipping meals
- Avoid eating in front of others
- Hoarding food

Physical health implications include obesity, which in itself can have serious outcomes. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of binge eating disorder is the first step to recovery for a person with this condition.

Treatment Options

- **Behavioral weight reduction.** These programs target both the issues of weight loss and depression. The combination of psychotherapy and antidepressants help the patient resolve the depression he/she is experiencing and with psychotherapy, it will address the eating disorder.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy.** In this type of therapy, clinicians will address the psychopathology that causes the binge eating and try to eliminate binge eating in that way. They treat their patients so that they feel better about themselves. The therapy addresses a person’s thoughts as well as behaviors about

eating and their self-image.

- **Interpersonal therapy.** If a person has interpersonal therapy for their depression and binge eating, it will be designed to help the patient to face and heal problems in current relationships. Some studies show evidence of the effectiveness on the patients' success in losing weight.

A study in the Archives of General Psychiatry compared the results of two different therapies on 162 overweight participants who were binge eating disorder patients. The study split the people into two groups. One group received cognitive behavioral therapy and the other, interpersonal therapy. Both therapies were shown to be very effective in treating binge eating as well as a range of other psychological issues.

If you are a binge-eater, you may want to be assessed to see if you have underlying depression. Both conditions can be treated and you can be successful with losing weight as well. Your psychologist can determine which course of therapy is right for you.