



BINGE EATING

Most of us tend to overeat on occasion, but what happens when it becomes uncontrollable and compulsive?

Poornima Makaram looks for solutions

It's a plateful

Binge eating is a disorder that drives you to consume large amounts of food at a time, even after you feel full. The thing with this disorder is that people can't control eating even when they know that it's bad for them.

Bangalore-based psychiatrist Dr Sumathi Ramachandra says, "Binge eating is characterised by regular bouts of overeating, accompanied by feelings of

KEEP WATCH

Never isolate yourself
Tell your family or a close friend about your binge eating habit—that way you will no longer be alone in your struggle.

Have a heavy breakfast
There's a reason why breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Those who skip breakfast are more prone to bingeing and eating high-calorie meals later during the day.

Keep a food diary so you can identify the times of day when you binge. And replace high-carb binge foods with fruits and salads.

guilt, depression and even self-loathing. Those who are victims of this disorder feel powerless to stop and often put on a lot of weight. This usually occurs after they go on a strict diet, post pregnancy or even when they are depressed and feel negative about themselves. The weight gain further depresses them, and they eat to make themselves feel better. This leads them into a vicious cycle of eating and depression."

Fight it

"To treat such cases, we make the person aware that they have an unhealthy relationship with food. Eating has to be about hunger and good nutrition. You should not eat to feed your emotional needs of deprivation, anxiety and low self-esteem. We involve the person's family and friends to help her cope with her feelings of negativity, and also to keep a watch on her eating habits and make her aware of the times when she resorts to binge eating," explains Dr Sumathi.

Maintain a food diary:

Nutritionist and dietician Kajal Thosani says, "Most often I have seen this happen to women after pregnancy, when they have put on weight and have a negative body image. I begin the process of

treatment by asking them to keep a food diary for three days, so they can identify the times of the day when they resort to binge eating."

Patience pays: "Abruptly depriving binge eaters of food only strengthens this vicious cycle, so we initially make them replace all their high-carb binge foods with fruits and salads. When they end up seeing the resulting weight loss in less than a week, it bolsters their confidence and begins to foster a more positive body image. Automatically, they stop wanting to eat excessively as they see their efforts result in success. We also help them fight the temptation to eat unhealthy foods by making them stock up on healthy alternatives," adds Kajal.

Move that body: Fitness expert Wanitha Ashok agrees that stress is a major contributor to binge eating. She says, "Exercise releases endorphins that fight the stress hormone, cortisol. Apart from this, deep-breathing exercises are a good option to de-stress. Boredom is yet another culprit behind binge eating, and so are loneliness and ennui. Stay busy by taking up a hobby, or engaging in some activity that will distract you from bingeing when the urge strikes." ●