

Frequently Asked Questions about Compulsive Overeating Disorders:

The following information is adapted from NIMH and Psychology Today

1. What is Compulsive Overeating?

A compulsive overeater is someone who eats compulsively but does not purge and usually becomes overweight. The person may consume large amounts of food in one sitting (binge eating) or may eat three meals and snack throughout the day.

2. Symptoms of Compulsive Overeating include:

Feeling like your eating is out of control. Eating large amounts of food quickly especially if one eats until uncomfortably full constitutes a binge. Eating alone due to embarrassment about the amount of food eaten is common. Compulsive overeaters typically feel disgusted, depressed or guilty after overeating. These feelings can set the stage for another binge. If your eating is out of control two or more days per week, it is likely that you are a compulsive overeater.

3. How is Compulsive/Binge eating treated?

Treatment for compulsive overeating may include psychotherapy, nutrition therapy, and/or joining a support group. Typically, compulsive overeating has emotional components and habit components. Cognitive behavioral therapy helps one to understand and modify unhealthy eating habits. The emotional issues that drive compulsive overeating can be treated by cognitive behavioral, insight-oriented and relationship therapies. Working with a nutritionist to design a healthy eating program can be helpful. Support programs can help compulsive overeaters learn to eat in healthy ways and learn cognitive behavioral skills that address various aspects of eating behavior.

4. How do I find the right provider?

Your EAP counselors are quite familiar with the diagnosis and range of treatments available for compulsive overeating. After an initial assessment, you will be presented with the range of treatment options that could be helpful. Many resources are available to treat compulsive overeating and your EAP counselor can help you find the right approach for you.