

# Top Tips for Managing Binge Eating

## Commit to Change

Change is hard. If you've had trouble changing your eating in the past, you've probably questioned your ability to change and this can make change seem even more impossible and overwhelming. Make a list of changes you've made in the past and the personal strengths that helped you to achieve these changes. Also list your reasons for wanting to change. When you're having a hard day and you're wavering from your goals, use this list to boost your motivation and stay on track.

## Identify your Triggers

The first step in managing your eating is identifying triggers. When you binge, record your triggers – remember triggers can be situational, cognitive, or emotional. Common triggers are: feeling upset, lonely, or bored; feeling hungry from dieting; or breaking a dietary rule. Once you know your triggers you can work towards eliminating them.

## Eat Regularly

Eat 3 meals and 2-3 snacks per day. It might feel like skipping meals will help you to lose weight, but it usually has the opposite effect. Skipping meals leads to intense hunger which triggers binge eating. Eating regularly is the most effective way to maintain a healthy weight.

## Avoid Compensating

After a binge you probably feel stressed and physically uncomfortable. To cope with these feelings and to “cancel out” binge calories you might vomit or take laxatives, and in the short-term this might help you to feel better, but it's not possible to cancel out calories from a binge, and in the longer-term compensating will maintain your binge eating. Set goals to stop compensating for binges. It might help to remember that: diuretics have no effect whatsoever on calorie absorption, any weight loss is due to water loss; laxatives don't effect calorie absorption either, they work on the large intestine whereas food is digested and absorbed in the small intestines; between 35-80% of calories are retained after vomiting.

## Manage Urges

Urges are like any of our other emotions - at their peak they can be intense and feel like they're never going to end, but they always pass. To prove this, practice waiting your urges out. To begin with, start with small blocks of time – see if you can delay acting on your urge by 5-minutes. If at the end of 5-minutes it feels like you can wait it out for another 5-minutes, do. Continue doing this until the urge passes.

Make a list of things you can do to keep busy and work through your list while you're waiting out your urge – you might surprise yourself.

# think TOP TIPS

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## Binge Eating

**Everyone eats more than they should every now and then, but binge eating is a term used to describe compulsive over-eating that occurs on a regular basis.**

**Binge eating involves two key features:**

- Eating a very large amount of food within a relatively short period of time (two hours)
- Feeling out of control while eating

**Other symptoms related to binge eating are:**

- Eating until you feel physically uncomfortable
- Eating even when you're not hungry
- Relying on eating to manage stress and other negative emotions
- Eating rapidly
- Eating in secret
- Feeling disgusting, depressed, or guilty after a binge

**Why someone starts binge eating will differ from person to person, but common risk factors are:**

- Strict dieting
- Body image dissatisfaction
- Low self-esteem
- An impulsive personality
- An all or nothing thinking style
- A lack of skills to cope with stress, low mood, or boredom.

**This tips sheet covers basic strategies for managing binge eating. If you find it hard to break the cycle, seek advice from a clinical psychologist.**