

ENCOURAGEMENT
INSPIRATION RELAXATION
UNDERSTANDING HOPE
SPECIALIST TRUST
CHANGE BULIMIA
FREEDOM PLEASURE RELIEF
CONFIDENCE EXHILARATION
ACCOMPLISHMENT
STIMULATING LIGHTENING
COMFORT CLEAN REVITALISING
OPTIMISM PLEASURE
WHOLENESS SOOTHING
QUALITY CARE PROTECTION
SUPPORT WELLBEING VIGOR
HAPPINESS VITALITY REST
GUIDANCE TRUST HELP
DEVELOPMENT NOURISHING
HOPE HEALTH LOVE
REFRESHING STIMULATING
HEALING AND RELAXATION
SANCTUARY ENERGY
STRENGTH EDUCATION SAFE
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CARE PRIORY

Bulimia is a common disorder. This leaflet aims to help you understand bulimia - the causes, symptoms and the treatment available.

What is bulimia?

Bulimia is an eating disorder characterised by binge-eating (sometimes eating three or four times a normal amount), followed by making yourself sick or taking laxatives to try to avoid putting on weight.

What causes bulimia?

Although bulimia is on the increase, we know little about what causes it. What we do know is that problems start when food is used to control feelings. After bingeing you may feel some short-term emotional relief, but the feelings and distress often return. Treatment helps to bring longer-lasting relief and a solution to your feelings.

Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, loneliness, and the emotional distress caused by events such as a death, starting work or sexual abuse can contribute to bulimia.

Research also suggests that your genes and your family's attitude towards food can make you more likely to suffer from bulimia.

Who gets bulimia?

Anyone can suffer from bulimia, at any age, but it's most common in young women between the ages of 15 and 25.

What are the symptoms of bulimia?

Not everyone will show the same symptoms, but the most common are:

- binge-eating followed by making yourself sick or taking laxatives;
- an obsession with food and calories;
- going to the toilet straight after meals to make yourself sick;
- an overwhelming feeling of guilt after binge-eating; and
- depression, and using drugs and alcohol to cope.

Your close family or friends may not notice these symptoms. And because you don't dramatically lose weight, other people may assume you are feeling well and happy.

SOOTHING RELAXATION REVITALISING ENERGY HOPE HEALING AND

How often will I binge?

How often you binge will vary. It could be every few months, every few weeks or several times a day.

What are the long-term physical side effects?

Continuous bingeing, vomiting and taking laxatives can, over time, lead to physical side effects including:

- fainting;
- choking;
- problems with vital internal organs due to lack of essential minerals;
- a ruptured stomach;
- bowel problems from laxative abuse;
- tooth enamel wearing away;
- a painful throat and damaged vocal chords;
- swollen cheeks; and
- in severe cases, epileptic fits or death through heart failure.

You may have had bulimia for several years and see it as part of your everyday life, but the sooner it's treated the less damage it will do to your body.

How does bulimia affect your family life?

Bulimia affects the whole family. Loved ones often find it hard to understand that an eating disorder is actually about feelings and coping, rather than food. This can lead to misunderstandings and arguments, particularly at meal times.

Can I recover from bulimia?

You can recover from bulimia and go on to live a full life, even after many years with the illness. You may feel unsure about getting help, but most people recover in a few months with the right professional treatment.

How is bulimia treated?

Bulimia needs specialist help to treat both the psychological causes and its physical side effects.

Contacting your GP is the easiest way to get help and further treatment. He or she may offer you counselling or dietary counselling, or refer you to a specialist for further assessment. This may lead to outpatient treatment or, if more serious, day or inpatient treatment.

If you're worried about talking to your GP, you can:

- consider writing down your concerns and questions;
- take a friend or family member with you;
- see another doctor in the practice; or
- join a new GP practice.

The type of professional support offered will depend upon the availability of services in your area and the arrangements that your primary care trust (PCT) has with other health authorities or private providers. Specialist treatment for eating disorders is also available privately through the Priory Group.

Family and friends can also help through their support and care. It is particularly helpful for relatives to understand that your eating problem is your way of coping with emotional difficulties and that you may have mixed feelings about changing your eating pattern.

Therapies used to treat bulimia include cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), dietary counselling, psychotherapy and family therapy. CBT has become more popular over the past few years and can reduce symptoms by identifying, challenging and changing the thinking patterns and beliefs that create negative feelings and eating-disorder behaviour such as bingeing and vomiting.

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Why use antidepressant medication?

Depression is common in people suffering from bulimia. Antidepressant medication helps treat the depression and can help reduce how often you binge.

Why use family therapy?

Most families benefit from family help aimed at supporting and managing any difficult relationships.

Self help

Self help may be useful as the first stage of treatment or alongside other treatments. There are many different types of self help publications, and you need to find the right one for you. The Eating Disorders Association has a list of self help publications, and many of them are available from the EDA bookshop.

Self help groups can be a useful support but they do not replace professional treatment. However, they can help sufferers and families understand that they are not alone, and offer valuable support and practical advice.

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines for treating eating disorders are the basis for good treatment in England and Wales (www.nice.org.uk). NICE also publish information for patients and their carers. At the moment there are no equivalent guidelines for treatment in Northern Ireland or Scotland.

Finding help

If you feel that you or a close relative are affected by bulimia and would like help or more information, you can speak to your GP or contact any of the following organisations.

Eating Disorders Association	0845 634 1414 (www.edauk.com)
Helpline e-mail address:	helpmail@edauk.com
NHS Direct (England and Wales)	0845 4647 (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)
NHS 24 (Scotland)	08454 242424 (www.nhs24.com)
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence	0207 067 5800 (www.nice.org.uk)
Priory	0845 4 PRIORY 0845 4 774679 (www.priorygroup.com)

If you are interested in receiving treatment from us, your GP will be able to refer you.

If you or your relative have private medical insurance, your insurer will probably insist that your GP refers you to us.

COMFORT ACCOMPLISHMENT
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Why should I choose Priory?

Our service

At Priory, our committed and professional staff provide the highest standards of care, understanding and service for everyone. This service brings hope and confidence, allowing our patients to take control of their lives within a safe and secure environment.

Expertise and innovation

Through our close links with the public and private sectors, we've developed the expertise and innovation to offer consistent and successful treatment. And, as Europe's leading independent provider of specialist mental health, neuro-rehabilitation and special education services, we bring experience and an excellent reputation.

We admit patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This document has been edited by Dr Alex Yellowlees, with the help of the Eating Disorders Association (www.edauk.com) and Plain English Campaign (www.plainenglish.co.uk).

The Crystal Mark applies to wording only.



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The Priory Hospital Altrincham

Rappax Road, Hale, Cheshire, WA15 0NX
Phone: 0161 904 0050 Fax: 0161 980 4322

The Priory Hospital Brighton & Hove

14-18 New Church Road, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 4FH
Phone: 01273 747 464 Fax: 01273 727 321

The Priory Hospital Bristol

Heath House Lane, Stapleton, Bristol, BS16 1EQ
Phone: 0117 952 5255 Fax: 0117 952 5552

The Priory Hospital Chelmsford

Stump Lane, Springfield Green, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 7SJ
Phone: 01245 345 345 Fax: 01245 346 177

The Priory Hospital Glasgow

38-40 Mansionhouse Road, Glasgow, G41 3DW
Phone: 0141 636 6116 Fax: 0141 636 5151

The Priory Hospital Hayes Grove

Prestons Road, Hayes, Bromley, Kent, BR2 7AS
Phone: 020 8462 7722 Fax: 020 8462 5028

The Priory Hospital North London

Grovelands House, The Bourne, Southgate, London, N14 6RA
Phone: 020 8882 8191 Fax: 020 8447 8138

The Priory Clinic Nottingham

Ransom Road, Nottingham, NG3 5GS
Phone: 0115 9693 388 Fax: 0115 9693 381

The Priory Hospital Preston

Rosemary Lane, Bartle, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 0HB
Phone: 01772 691 122 Fax: 01772 691 246

The Priory Hospital Roehampton

Priory Lane, Roehampton, London, SW15 5JJ
Phone: 020 8876 8261 Fax: 020 8392 2632

The Priory Hospital Southampton

Hythe Road, Marchwood, Southampton, SO40 4WU
Phone: 023 8084 0044 Fax: 023 8020 7554

The Priory Ticehurst House

Ticehurst, Wadhurst, East Sussex, TN5 7HU
Phone: 01580 200 391 Fax: 01580 201 006

The Priory Hospital Woking

Chobham Road, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2QF
Phone: 01483 489 211 Fax: 01483 797 053

Woodbourne Priory Hospital

21 Woodbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B17 8BY
Phone: 0121 434 4343 Fax: 0121 434 3270

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