

the  
**bulimia  
help  
method**



**Recovery Checklist**

Scientific research indicates that bulimia is mostly the result of malnutrition. If we address the malnutrition we go a long way to healing your eating disorder. This includes resolving any psychological issues you may have. Put simply, if we heal the body we can heal the mind.

## Stage 1 in Recovery: Structured Eating

**This is one of most powerful things you can do to reduce the urge to binge. By following the steps in this stage you can expect around a massive 50% to 90% of reduction in your binge urges.**

To begin with...

- Visit your doctor for a check up before starting any self-help program.
- Aim to eat at least three meals and three snacks every day, ensuring you eat (at least) every three hours in the day.
- Don't wait for hunger, eat according to the clock. It can help to set your times prior to starting.
- For now, stay safe and stick to foods you feel comfortable eating.
  
- Next, ensure you have a portion of fat, carbs and protein in each of your meals (preferably snacks too). This will help rebalance blood sugars, provide nutrition and reduce binge urges. The more balanced the meals the better, but only eat foods that you are comfortable with.
  
- Finally over the next few weeks gradually increase the size of your portions until you are eating around the recommended calorie amount for your age, height and activity level and body type. Give your body time to adjust. You don't want to feel uncomfortably full and risk purging. After a few weeks if you are still regularly bingeing then you may need to increase the amount you are eating with each meal.
  
- If you binge, or binge and purge you must still stick to your structured eating plan.
  
-  Your weight will fluctuate a little during this period. This is normal, do not panic! (your weight will not balloon out of control.) Everyone experiences bloating at the start of recovery for around a month and it's absolutely 100% perfectly natural, and normal.
-  Research shows that most people with bulimia (who are in the healthy weight range and who adopt to regular eating habits and don't purge) end up within 1kg of where they started, and some even lose weight (<http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au>).
-  It's all about trust between you and your body... keep reminding yourself that you're not broken or ruined by bulimia and you can get normal back. It is very common to experience an increase in emotional mood swings at the start of your recovery. This is part of the process of change. This is to be expected. and in time it will calm down a lot.

## Stage 2 in Recovery: Stop Bingeing and Purging

If you have had bulimia for a long time, your brain may have been conditioned at a subconscious level to have stronger cravings for food under certain emotional conditions. This is simply an automatic habitual reaction and it has nothing to do with your personality, upbringing or self esteem. We can remove these binge urges by applying the Accept, Distract and Delay technique.

### The A.D.D Technique:

1. Accept the binge urge. Remind yourself that the binge urge is just a feeling, it cannot control you, it is not dangerous and does not need to be fought. Accept you have no real control over the being urge and allow the urge to rise and fall again.
2. Delay taking any action towards your urge for the next 10 minutes.
3. Distract yourself during the 10 minutes.
4. If possible delay for another 10 minutes. Over the next few weeks try to increase the length of time you managed to go without bingeing.

You are not expected to just stop bingeing. But if you do binge do try to resist purging.

You can also use the A.D.D Technique to prevent purging.

If you do binge try to avoid going into the binge trance by eating with full awareness of what you are doing, when you are doing it.

This can help to reduce the intensity and duration of the binge.

- Realize that purging is not effective for weight management.
- Aim to lower your stress levels by taking a time out each day to relax
- Ensure you get a good nights sleep.
- Remove any potential triggers from your home environment.
- Keep yourself busy throughout the day to help keep you distracted.
- Create a new routine for after meals to help prevent purging
- Cut back on excessive exercise and laxatives gradually.

 Understand that there is no such thing as a perfect recovery. EVERYONE relapses along the way, but these episodes of relapse provide invaluable learning experiences. After a relapse, give yourself 5-10 minutes to figure out why it happened and how you can be better prepared in future.

 Remember, at any moment you can stop the binge-purge cycle, even when you think you've already taking actions towards a binge.

## Stage 3 in Recovery: Making Peace With Food

**By listening to your body very closely you can learn from it.**

- To help us make peace with food we want to get out of the habit of labeling foods as good and bad, instead label foods as “sometimes foods” and “all the time foods”.
- To help us overcome our harmful food rules, we can start adding portions of our favorite “sometimes” foods to our meal plan. Over time build up to including one or two portions of your “sometimes” foods to your meal plan every day.
- It can really help to start to get into the habit of eating slower. You don't have to eat at a snails pace, just start eating your meals a little slower than usual. In time this will help you to accurately eat the right amount of food that is perfect for you.
- Paying attention will also really help you to understand the intimate relationship between food and your body. You will get a better understanding of what foods really satisfy your needs and how much you really need to eat in order to feel comfortably satisfied.
- It can also really help to eat all your meals in one place. Make it pleasurable and relaxing. Sit down when eating; perhaps try lighting a candle or playing relaxing music.
- Begin to ask yourself "How hungry am I and what does it feel like?" multiple times throughout the day. This will help you to reconnect, understand and trust your hunger.

### The Hunger Scale

1. Physically faint
2. Ravenous
3. Fairly hungry
4. Slightly hungry
5. Neutral
6. Pleasantly satisfied
7. Full
8. Over full
9. Bloating
10. Nauseous

### Physical signs of hunger to look out for

- Growling stomach
- Light headedness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritable
- Headache
- Empty insecure feeling
- Hollow feeling in stomach
- Nausea
- Shaky

## Stage 4 in Recovery: Self Acceptance

As crazy as this sounds, the best way to feel thinner and happier is to stop restricting and to allow yourself to reach your natural healthy set point weight.

Once you stop binge eating and purging, and begin eating in a healthy, balanced way, many biological and physiological changes will occur in your body. As a direct result of these changes, the amount of body-negativity you experience will decrease and your obsessive thought patterns will diminish (Fairburn, Marcus, et al., 1993).

Realistically you're going to need to wait for at least 6 months, and maybe a little longer, for those natural improvements to take effect.

### Reframe Negative Self talk

To encourage more positive self-talk, the next time you find yourself being critical or speaking harshly to yourself:

1. Acknowledge what it is that you're feeling.
2. Encourage yourself to look at the bigger picture and focus on logic and the facts of the situation.

### In the mean time....

- Make a list of your positive attributes and review it whenever you are in need of a self-esteem boost.
- Delete or remove anything that is not recovery-friendly from your phone, computer, and tablet.
- Throw away glossy magazines and consider changing your TV viewing habits.
- Get rid of your "skinny" clothes.
- Commit to avoiding toxic conversations, situations, and people.
- Set some body checking limits and actively reducing the amount of time you would usually spend agonizing over the way you look
- Throw away your scale! Don't rely on a scale to inform you of your progress. Your mood, energy levels, reduction in binge urges and improving relationship with food and your body will tell you all you need to know about your progress.

*Changing the way you feel about yourself and losing that desire to lose weight or achieve the perfect body will take time. It's a process. So for now just keep focusing on your freedom and keep discovering how incredible life can be once bulimia is out of the picture.*

## Stage 5 in Recovery: Intuitive Eating

**Intuitive eating is an extremely powerful and simple way to eat food that will allow you to maintain a healthy weight for life without any pain, suffering, rules or plans.**

This is an advanced stage of recovery. Only start this stage once you have stopped bingeing and purging and are able to listen to and trust your hunger signals.

The three principles of intuitive eating are:

1. Eat when you feel hungry
2. Eat what you feel like eating
3. Stop when you feel comfortably satisfied.

- Choose one meal a day to begin with. For this meal don't plan what you are going to eat. Once you notice that you are becoming hungry, wrap your hands around your stomach and close your eyes for a moment and then ask yourself: "What do I "feel" like eating?".
- Next, choose one meal a day to practice listening to your satiety. Eat slowly and pay attention during the meal and keep an eye out for feelings of satisfaction. Pause during the meal, put your hand on your stomach and ask yourself "Am I truly satisfied, or do I need to eat more food?". If you are truly satisfied walk away from the table, If not, continue eating until you are.
- Finally for one meal a day stop eating according to the clock and instead eat when you feel hungry.
-  Once you feel confident in your ability to trust your hunger to tell you what, when and how much to eat move from structured eating to fully intuitive eating

### Further Support

The more support you have for your recovery the better your chances of success. At [bulimiahelp.org](https://bulimiahelp.org) we provide additional support via our online programs and dedicated one-to-one recovery coaching.

**Learn more at [bulimiahelp.org](https://bulimiahelp.org)**