

## Food Addiction Overview

Written by Nick Mirrione

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**Compulsive overeating**, also sometimes called **food addiction**, is characterized by an [obsessive/compulsive](#)

relationship to food. Professionals address this with either a behavior-modification model or a food-addiction model.

An individual suffering from compulsive overeating disorder engages in frequent episodes of uncontrolled eating, or

[binge eating](#)

, during which they may feel frenzied or out of control, often consuming food past the point of being comfortably full. Binging in this way is generally followed by feelings of guilt and depression. Unlike individuals with

[bulimia](#)

, compulsive overeaters do not attempt to compensate for their binging with purging behaviors such as fasting, laxative use or vomiting. Compulsive overeaters will typically eat when they are not hungry. Their obsession is demonstrated in that they spend excessive amounts of time and thought devoted to food, and secretly plan or fantasize about eating alone. Compulsive overeating usually leads to weight gain and

[obesity](#)

, but not everyone who is obese is also a compulsive overeater. While compulsive overeaters tend to be

[overweight](#)

or obese, persons of normal or average weight can also be affected.

In addition to binge eating, compulsive overeaters can also engage in grazing behavior, during which they return to pick at food throughout the day. These things result in a large overall number of calories consumed even if the quantities eaten at any one time may be small. When a compulsive eater overeats primarily through binging, he or she can be said to have [binge eating disorder](#)

Left untreated, compulsive overeating can lead to serious medical conditions including [high cholesterol](#)

, [diabetes](#)

, [heart disease](#)

, [hypertension](#)

, sleep apnea, and

[major depression](#)

. Additional long-term side effects of the condition also include

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[kidney disease](#)

,

[arthritis](#)

, bone deterioration and

[stroke](#)

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