



National Eating Disorders Association

NEDA Research Corner

A review of

“Striegel, R., Bedrosian, R., Wang, C., & Schwartz, S. (2011).
Why Men Should Be Included in Research on Binge Eating:
Results from a Comparison of Psychosocial Impairment in Men and Women.
International Journal of Eating Disorders.”

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It is well known that the eating disorders anorexia and bulimia nervosa tend to occur more often in women than in men. However, binge eating disorder is equally common in women and men. Binge eating is characterized as an episode of overeating paired with a sense of being “out of control.” There has been little research into whether there are differences in symptoms in women and men with binge eating disorder.

This study examined both the prevalence of binge eating in males and females and how this behavior is associated with behavioral impairment. The authors assessed approximately 45,000 individuals who participated in a health risk self-assessment screening. The study found that 7.5% of the men and 11.2% of the women had experienced at least one binge episode over the past month.

The men and women who reported bingeing were significantly younger than those who did not report binge eating. Both men and women who engage in binge eating were more likely to be obese. Moreover, those who had binge eating were more likely to have depression, stress, reduced work productivity, and general activity impairment.

Interestingly, the differences between men and women tended to be modest. The authors concluded that binge eating among men is related to considerable functional impairment. This is especially important to note because men are less likely than women to seek help for binge eating, and health service providers are less likely to detect disordered eating among men.

In sum, the prevalence of binge eating is greater for both men and women than that of other eating disorders, and greater among men than previously thought. Binge eating is associated with significantly more distress, depression, and obesity. The pervasiveness of binge eating and its dramatic effects on psychological and social functioning highlights the importance for more research on this debilitating disorder. Researchers and clinicians should not underestimate the effect of binge eating on men in particular.