

# Binge eating, overeating may be associated with initiating use of marijuana, other drugs

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Overeating and binge eating may be associated with initiating use of marijuana and other drugs in a study of adolescents and young adults, according to a study published Online First by *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

Binge eating is defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fourth Edition) as eating an amount of food that is larger than most people would eat in a similar period under similar circumstances and feeling a lack of control over eating during the episode, according to the study background.

Kendrin R. Sonneville, Sc.D., R.D., of Boston Children's Hospital, and colleagues examined the association between [overeating](#) (without loss of control) and binge eating (overeating with loss of control) and adverse outcomes such as overweight/obesity, [depressive symptoms](#), frequent binge drinking, marijuana use and other drug use.

The study included 16,882 boys and girls who were 9 to 15 years old in 1996 and participated in the Growing Up Today Study. Overeating and binge eating were assessed by questionnaires every 12 to 24 months between 1996 and 2005.

Binge eating was more common among females than males, with 2.3 percent to 3.1 percent of females and 0.3 percent to 1 percent of males reporting binge eating between the ages of 16 and 24, according to the study results.

"In summary, we found that binge eating, but not overeating, predicted the onset of overweight/obesity and worsening depressive symptoms. We further observed that any overeating, with or without LOC [loss of control], predicted the onset of marijuana and other [drug](#) use," the authors comment.

Binge eating, but not overeating, was associated with incident overweight/obesity (odds ratio, 1.73) and the onset of high depressive symptoms (odds ratio, 2.19) in fully adjusted statistical models. Neither overeating nor binge eating appeared to be associated with starting to binge drink frequently, according to the study results.

"Findings from this investigation and previous research suggest that LOC is an important indicator of severity of overeating episodes and highlight the importance of ascertaining LOC, in addition to whether adolescents engage in overeating episodes," the authors conclude. "Given that binge eating is uniquely predictive of some adverse outcomes and because previous work has found that binge eating is amenable to intervention, clinicians should be encouraged to screen [adolescents](#) for [binge eating](#)."

**More information:** *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*. Published online December 10, 2012. [doi:10.1001/2013/jamapediatrics.12](https://doi.org/10.1001/2013/jamapediatrics.12)

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