BES

Binge Eating Scale (BES)

The BES is a 16-item self-report questionnaire designed to identify and quantify the severity of binge eating symptoms. It explores both the behavioral manifestations of binge episodes and the associated cognitive and emotional experiences, such as loss of control, guilt, shame, or preoccupation with food. Originally developed in adults with obesity, it is now widely used in clinical psychology, psychiatry, nutrition, and bariatric surgery programs. Its main value lies in screening for clinically significant binge eating, estimating baseline severity, and monitoring progress during treatment.

Number of questions	16 questions
Estimated duration	5 minutes
Language	English
Original name	Binge Eating Scale
Target audience	Adults
Authors	J. Gormally, S. Black, S. Daston, D. Rardin (1982)
Category	Eating disorders

Preview of the 16 questions

Question 1

- I don't feel self-conscious about my weight or body size when I'm with others.
- I feel concerned about how I look to others, but it normally does not make me feel disappointed with myself.
- I do get self-conscious about my appearance and weight which makes me feel disappointed in myself.
- I feel very self-conscious about my weight and frequently, I feel intense shame and disgust for myself. I try to avoid social contacts because of my self consciousness.

Question 2

I don't have any difficulty eating slowly in the proper manner.

Although I seem to "gobble down" foods, I don't end up feeling stuffed because of eating too much.

At times, I tend to eat quickly and then, I feel uncomfortably full afterwards.

I have the habit of bolting down my food, without really chewing it. When this happens I usually feel uncomfortably stuffed because I've eaten too much.

Question 3

I feel capable to control my eating urges when I want to.

I feel like I have failed to control my eating more than the average person.

I feel utterly helpless when it comes to feeling in control of my eating urges.

Because I feel so helpless about controlling my eating I have become very desperate about trying to get in control.

Question 4

I don't have the habit of eating when I'm bored.

I sometimes eat when I'm bored, but often I'm able to "get busy" and get my mind off food.

I have a regular habit of eating when I'm bored, but occasionally, I can use some other activity to get my mind off eating.

I have a strong habit of eating when I'm bored. Nothing seems to help me break the habit.

Question 5

I'm usually physically hungry when I eat something.

Occasionally, I eat something on impulse even though I really am not hungry.

I have the regular habit of eating foods, that I might not really enjoy, to satisfy a hungry feeling even though physically, I don't need the food.

Even though I'm not physically hungry, I get a hungry feeling in my mouth that only seems to be satisfied when I eat a food, like a sandwich, that fills my mouth. Sometimes, when I eat the food to satisfy my mouth hunger, I then spit the food out so I won't gain weight.

Scoring & interpretation

Each item offers 3 or 4 statements ranked by increasing severity. The patient chooses only one statement per item. Responses are weighted from 0 to 2 or from 0 to 3 depending on the item, then summed to obtain a total score ranging from 0 to 46. The usual interpretation is as follows: 0 to 17, no or minimal binge eating; 18 to 26, moderate level; 27 and above, severe level. In practice, a total score greater than or equal to 18 suggests clinically significant binge eating and warrants further clinical assessment. Interpretation focuses mainly on the total score rather than on subscores.