

New treatment for binge eating disorder: Deep brain stimulation

An implant in your brain might sound science-fiction, but a new study suggests that it may reduce the urge for binge eating, in those with the disorder.

Researchers asked the question: what if an uncontrollable urge to rapidly eat large amounts of food is stemmed from an impaired brain circuit? If that were the case, people who live with [binge eating disorder](#)—a psychiatric diagnosis—might be no more at fault for overeating than a patient with Parkinson's disease is for their tremors.

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Deep brain stimulation, or DBS, is a method routinely used to suppress tremors in patients with Parkinson's. In DBS, "electrodes are implanted into the brain in centers that might not be working as well as we would like," explains [Amit Sachdev, M.D.](#), medical director for neurology at Michigan State University. The brain uses small electrical impulses to communicate, and the battery pack and electrodes help to stimulate areas, he adds. For the binge eating treatment, the device only stimulates neurons when the device detects a signal to start a binge.

The small study, published earlier this year in the journal [Nature Medicine](#), involves two women and will be expanded in a few months to include four more people living with binge eating disorder who regained the weight they lost after bariatric surgery.

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