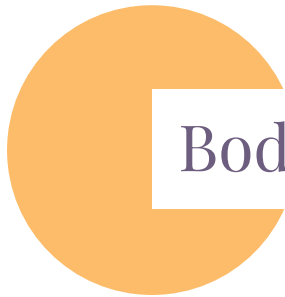




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Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)

Sufferers of BDD tend to obsess over one or more perceived flaws in their physical appearance.

These flaws often appear very slight to other people, but to the sufferer it can be a significant source of distress.

For those with BDD, this preoccupation with appearance can lead to obsessive behaviours and have a significant impact on their ability to cope with normal day-to-day life.

Statistics:

- † It's estimated that one in every 100 people in the UK suffers from BDD, although it is likely much higher as most people tend to hide it.
- † The condition can start at any age, although it is most frequent in adolescence (16-18).
- † It is also more common in people with a history of depression or anxiety and may exist alongside an eating disorder, such as anorexia or bulimia.

Signs and symptoms:

- † Constantly checking themselves in the mirror

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- † Comparing their looks to other people all the time
- † Obsessing over their appearance or certain features
- † Avoiding social situations for fear of being judged
- † Taking an excessively long amount of time to get ready
- † Seeking medical treatment or cosmetic surgery for their perceived defect

Treatment for Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD):

Sadly, there's been very little research in the field of BDD, as sufferers tend to not be very open about their condition due to feeling ashamed or embarrassed. However, from the limited research that has taken place, what seems to be effective in helping to improve symptoms are the following:

- † **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)** – Individuals work with a therapist to help change the way they think and behave regarding their condition. There will usually be some goals – for example, one could be to limit behaviour that is known to trigger the condition, such as compulsively checking their appearance in the mirror.
- † **Gradual exposure** is another important element in treating BDD. This involves placing the individual in a situation that they would normally avoid out of anxiety, for increasing lengths of time in order to build their levels of comfort with being in that environment.
- † **Medication** – For BDD, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) tend to be the most effective. These are an antidepressant that work to increase the levels of serotonin in the brain. It's difficult to say whether or not mental health problems are caused by a lack of serotonin in the brain, but it does appear that when the levels are increased, symptoms are reduced, which allows sufferers to engage with other forms of help, such as CBT.

There are also a number of **self-help strategies** to encourage if someone is struggling with BDD. These include:

- † **Growth mindset**
- † **Social support**
- † **Being present**
- † **Practicing gratitude**
- † **Diet/Exercise**



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If you would like to know more, please download our guide on the “[Five Ways to Wellbeing](#)” and read our blog “[The Rise of BDD in young people](#).”

Further Information:

[Body Dysmorphic Disorder \(BDD\) Foundation](#)

Charity offering advice and support to sufferers of Body Dysmorphic Disorder.

[MIND](#)

One of the largest mental health charities around. Offers extensive information and advice on a variety of mental health issues.

Tel: 0300 123 3393

[Childline](#)

Free 24hr helpline for children and young people in the UK.

Tel: 0800 1111