

# Perfectionism and Bulimia

## Problem:

Bulimia nervosa is an eating disorder involving binge eating and efforts to prevent weight gain (e.g., vomiting or fasting) along with extreme importance placed on body shape and weight (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

## Question:

For decades, clinicians have speculated that perfectionism is central to the personality of people who develop bulimia (Bruch, 1973). But does scientific evidence suggest perfectionism leads people to develop bulimia?

## Method:

We located 12 longitudinal studies testing the connection between perfectionism and bulimia. These studies involved 4,665 participants with an average age of 19.3 years ( $SD = 9.1$ ).

## Results:

Using meta-analysis, we combined the results of these 12 studies. And we found perfectionism at time 1 predicts increases in bulimia at time 2, after controlling for bulimia at time 1.

## Conclusions:

Our study is the most complete test of the perfectionism-bulimia relationship to date. **Perfectionism appears part of the personality of people who develop bulimia.** Clinicians may need to assess and to treat both bulimic symptoms and underlying perfectionism.

Our study is the most complete test of the perfectionism-bulimia connection to date.

A copy of our article is available here:  
[Tinyurl.com/CRUXbulimia](https://tinyurl.com/CRUXbulimia)



Kehayes, I. L., Smith, M. M., Sherry, S. B., & Vidovic, V. (2018). Are perfectionism dimensions risk factors for bulimic symptoms? A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Personality and Individual Differences*.

Infographic by Dr. Simon Sherry. He is a Professor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at Dalhousie University. Dr. Sherry researches, assesses, and treats eating disorders and related problems (e.g., personality disorders, depression, and addiction). For more information, see [cruxpsychology.ca](http://cruxpsychology.ca).