# Body dysmorphic disorder in one page

What it is

## What is body dysmorphia?

They are the same thing. Body dysmorphia is the everyday name for body dysmorphic disorder, or BDD. It is a recognised condition in which part of your appearance takes over your thinking, while other people see nothing wrong or something minor. It usually starts in the teens and sits alongside OCD in both diagnostic manuals.

- Body dysmorphia and BDD are the same thing
- A part of your looks takes over
- Others see nothing wrong, or something minor

The signs

## What are the symptoms of body dysmorphia?

The main symptom is constant worry about a flaw in how you look that others cannot see or think is minor. It drives hours of mirror checking or avoiding mirrors, hiding the area, comparing yourself, grooming, skin picking and asking if you look okay.

- Constant worry about a flaw others barely see
- Checking mirrors often, or avoiding them
- Hiding the area with make-up, clothes or poses

How a diagnosis happens

## What will a doctor ask me about my appearance?

Expect plain questions, not an examination. Australian clinicians are pointed to four: whether you have concerns about how you look, how much time you spend worrying, whether you repeatedly check, fix or hide, and whether it distresses you or gets in the way of your life. You can work out your answers before you go.

- Four short questions, not an examination
- They ask about time, checking and what it costs you

Treatment

## How do I find a psychologist for BDD?

Ask before you book. No Australian directory lists BDD psychologists, so search for body image or OCD, then ask each whether they have treated body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) and use therapy built for it.

- No directory proves BDD experience. Ask.

Medication

## Is one medicine used for both?

Often, yes. The main medicines for body dysmorphic disorder are SSRIs, and they help depression too. When depression is also present, UK guidance asks for careful, frequent checks in the first weeks, because suicidal thoughts can rise early on. A GP or psychiatrist prescribes. Do not stop suddenly without talking to them.

Who diagnoses and who prescribes

## Who can prescribe medicine for BDD, and can my GP?

Yes, a GP can write the script. The medicines doctors sometimes use for BDD are not Schedule 8, so no special state permit applies. Any doctor approved to prescribe PBS medicines may write them. The PBS lists no medicine for BDD, so a script for BDD is usually a private one. Whether your GP starts a medicine is up to them.

What it costs

## Is there free or low-cost help?

Free help exists, but none of it names BDD. Butterfly's National Helpline takes body image concerns, Medicare Mental Health Centres see anyone with no referral, and headspace serves 12 to 25 year olds.

**In danger? Call 000. Lifeline 13 11 14, text 0477 13 11 14, or chat online.**

**Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467. Free counselling by phone or video, any hour.**

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