

Body Dismorphic Disorder (BDD)



A mental disorder defined as a preoccupation with a perceived defect in one's appearance, eg if a slight defect is present (which others hardly notice) it is regarded as markedly excessive.

The term Dysmorphophobia is also used by psychiatrists. To warrant a diagnosis the individual's preoccupation must be causing significant distress or handicap in their social or occupational life.

Symptoms

Due to its symptoms BDD may also be associated with:

- OCD - repeated checking of the 'defect'
- Major Depressive Disorder - feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem
- Delusional Disorder – perception that the 'defect' is more pronounced than it is in reality
- Social phobia - will avoid contact with others due to embarrassment of 'defect'; fearful of judgement of others

Onset and incidence

It is unclear why this disorder develops. Biological, psychological and social factors have all been implicated. The disorder tends to follow a continuous path. However the focus of the preoccupation may change.

Onset usually occurs in adolescence though in some instances in childhood. It seems to be equally prevalent in men and women. It is not clear how common the disorder is but in cosmetic and dermatological settings it has been reported in as many as 15% of individuals - cosmetic surgery is usually contra-indicated.

Treatment

Psychotherapy and counselling are thought to be beneficial in many cases. Cognitive behavioural therapy in particular can help. Medication prescribed tends to be SSRIs that are also used to treat depression, OCD and other anxiety related disorders.