About Us

The TLC Foundation for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors is the world's leading authority on hair pulling, skin picking, and related disorders that affect 3% of the population. Guided by a Scientific Advisory Board of the foremost clinical and research professionals in the field, we take a comprehensive approach to helping people overcome their disorder and heal.

Our approach includes: creating a community of support for affected individuals; providing referrals to treatment specialists and resources; training professionals to recognize and treat BFRBs; and directing research into its causes, treatment, and prevention. The TLC Foundation for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors is a donor-supported, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1991 as the Trichotillomania Learning Center.

716 Soquel Ave., Suite A
Santa Cruz, CA 95062 USA
+1 (831) 457-1004
info@bfrb.org

To learn more visit us at:
www.bfrb.org

Understanding Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors
Hair Pulling, Skin Picking, and Related Disorders

What is Body-Focused Repetitive Behavior?

Body-focused repetitive behavior (BFRB) is an umbrella term for a group of related disorders including hair pulling, skin picking, and nail biting. These behaviors are not habits or tics; rather, they are complex disorders that cause people to repeatedly touch their hair and body in ways that result in physical damage.

The best research suggests that 3% or more of the population lives with a BFRB – that’s over 10 million people in North America alone – yet they often go undiagnosed and untreated, causing shame and isolation.

Symptoms tend to begin around puberty, and may come and go over time, but usually require intervention to achieve lasting remission. Women have a greater chance of being affected than men. The causes are not fully understood, but evidence shows that these disorders are at least partly hereditary.

Common BFRBs

C Hair Pulling Disorder (Trichotillomania) causes people to pull out the hair from their scalp, eyelashes, eyebrows, and other parts of the body resulting in noticeable bald patches.

C Skin Picking Disorder (Excoriation) causes people to repetitively touch, rub, scratch, pick at, or dig into their skin, resulting in skin discoloration, scarring, and even severe tissue damage and disfigurement.

C Nail Biting Disorder (Onychophagia) causes people to bite their nails past the nail bed and chew on cuticles until they bleed, leading to soreness and infection.

C Related behaviors include frequently chewing on the inside of the cheeks and biting the lips until they bleed.

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Leading Research into BFRBs

In April 2014, The TLC Foundation for BFRBs launched the BFRB Precision Medicine (BPM) Initiative, bringing the cutting edge approach of precision medicine to the goal of finding new, more effective treatments for BFRBs. Precision medicine uses behavioral, genetic, and biological indicators to describe an individual pattern of disease in order to develop individualized treatments. It has revolutionized cancer treatment, and our national team of scientists is bringing this same approach to BFRB research.

The BPM Initiative is an unprecedented collaboration of the world's leading academic and medical institutions in this field. The vision for the BPM Initiative is to increase BFRB remission rates from today’s levels of 10–20% up to 70% or higher over the next seven years. To learn more, visit www.bfrb.org/research.

How are BFRBs Treated?

The Scientific Advisory Board of the TLC Foundation for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors is made up of clinicians and researchers working at the forefront of BFRB treatment. The Board recommends that sufferers begin by developing a solid understanding of their behavior and finding the emotional support they will need to address it. Sufferers and their health providers can then consider the psychological interventions, medications, and other therapies that have proven effective in helping people achieve remission.

Education and Support

We provide brochures, webinars, and online content (at no cost) for the community of people affected by BFRBs, including not only sufferers and their families, but also educators, physicians, psychotherapists, and cosmetologists who may be among the first to notice a problem. We also help launch in-person support groups in cities around the world and host an annual conference where hundreds of people coping with BFRBs meet each other and learn from the field’s top health experts.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Research supports certain forms of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) as treatment for BFRB. To address the serious shortage of BFRB specialists, The TLC Foundation for BFRBs provides training for licensed psychologists and clinical social workers who wish to use current best practice treatment with their clients. Our website provides referrals to local BFRB treatment providers.

"The support and community provided by TLC have not only helped me feel better about myself, but also find a level of recovery from BFRBs that I never thought was possible."

CHRISTINA LANG | Member

Medication

No medication is currently approved by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) for treatment of BFRBs, though a few have proven to reduce symptoms in some individuals. Medications may also be useful in treating co-existing problems such as anxiety or depression.

Request our booklet “Expert Consensus Treatment Guidelines” for more detailed information.

Sharing knowledge. Supporting recovery. Finding a cure. >>> bfrb.org