

Getting Started Guide

Finding Support, Resources, and Understanding Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors



If you or someone you love is experiencing body-focused repetitive behaviors (BFRBs), you may feel alone, confused, and in need of help. By visiting this website, you are already on a good path to healing by reaching out for more information. There are many tools that can help individuals experiencing BFRBs navigate these challenges. So take a deep breath, relax, and know that we are here to support you!

This guide includes basic information about The TLC Foundation for BFRBs, support, treatment exploration, finding resources, opportunities for connection, and the services we provide.

We understand that if you are new to BFRBs, information about these disorders can feel overwhelming. A good place to start is by reviewing this guide and clicking on the links for more information.

Who are we and what do we do?

TLC is a health-related human services organization dedicated to supporting the 1-in-20 individuals experiencing body-focused repetitive behaviors (BFRBs) through advocacy, awareness, connection, health education, celebration, and equitable access to effective evidence-based treatments.

Our team works daily to advocate for our vibrant and inclusive community supporting one another to reach our full potential and self-identified success. We recognize that having a BFRB does not define a person and respect that everyone's journey is different.

TLC provides ongoing health education and opportunities for community connection to improve the quality of life for individuals experiencing BFRBs, their family members, and loved ones.

If you would like additional information, please don't hesitate to email info@bfrb.org or call us at 831-457-1004. Our staff can be reached from 9 am - 5 pm PST, Monday - Friday.

Warmest wishes,

The TLC Foundation for BFRBs Team

What are Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors?

Body-focused repetitive behavior (BFRB) is an umbrella term for a group of related disorders including hair pulling, skin picking, cheek biting, nail biting, or similar behaviors. 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 impacts to the body. These behaviors are all considered BFRBs because they share similar characteristics. The difference between normal grooming behaviors and a BFRB arises when the behavior(s) cause substantial personal distress and/or interfere with daily functioning.

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, often 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 often hereditary.

How are BFRBs Treated?

The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of The TLC Foundation for Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors is made up of clinicians and researchers working at the forefront of BFRB research and treatments. The SAB recommends one begins their path to recovery by developing a solid understanding of their behavior and finding the emotional support they will need to address it. Patients and their healthcare providers can then consider the psychological interventions, medications, and other therapies that have proven effective in helping people achieve remission.

Recommended Reading

Free Articles on bfrb.org:

- [Self-Help Strategies for BFRBs](#)
- [Toddler & Preschool Hair Pulling](#)
- [N-acetylcysteine for Trichotillomania, Skin Picking, and Nail Biting](#)

Recommended Books

- [The Hair Pulling Habit and You - A Workbook for Kids and Parents](#)
- [Overcoming Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors: A Comprehensive Behavioral Treatment for Hair Pulling and Skin Picking](#)
- [Treatments that Work: Acceptance & Commitment Therapy for Trichotillomania](#)

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Research supports certain forms of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) as treatment for BFRB. Recently published research showed that CBT is the most effective treatment overall. Often, an individualized combination of treatment approaches is helpful.

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-occurring disorders such as anxiety or depression. Medications are often used to lessen feelings or sensations that can increase picking or pulling rather than treat the disorder itself.

Education and Support

If you or someone you love is affected by BFRBs:

Read our booklet, [Expert Consensus Treatment Guidelines](#), for specific information on what BFRBs are, various types of treatments, and how to find help. You may also access:

[articles on treatment, self-help, and BFRBs in children](#)

[parent and caregiver resources](#)

[teen and young adult resources](#)

and more!

Support for affected individuals and families

Connecting with people who can relate to what you're experiencing can be a helpful step in your journey of self-love, self-compassion, and healing. Below are resources for community connection and support opportunities.

[Support Group Directory \(groups facilitated independently of TLC\)](#)

[TLC Events](#)

[Connect with others through TLC's Instagram](#)

[Connect with others through TLC's Facebook Page](#)

Referrals to mental health treatment providers & service providers

[Find a treatment provider](#)

[Find a salon, cosmetologist, or other service provider](#)

What can families and friends do to help?

To be a supportive, helpful, and fully invested member of a support team, it is important that you are strong, informed, empathic, and calm when helping your loved one. Well-meaning friends and family members often wish to be helpful, yet at times their efforts can actually be hurtful and may even contribute to the problem. Maintaining a supportive role, sensitive and effective communication, patience, and flexibility can be very important for family members who are attempting to support an individual with a BFRB. It is also important to take care of yourself as you try to support and assist your affected loved one. Books, support groups, community connection through TLC events, and other resources are available to family members who need additional support.

How We Help

Services TLC Provides

Our website offers free comprehensive information about BFRBs including resource articles and videos on treatment and self help, personal stories of recovery and healing, and specific information for parents and teens.

[Visit the Resource Library.](#)

TLC's Community Outreach & Education

TLC Virtual Programming consists of online events held throughout the year that emphasize awareness, community connection, health education, celebration. TLC's virtual programs cover a wide range of topics, are community-centered, and create specific opportunities for inquiries, engagement, and support.

[Learn more about TLC Events.](#)

TLC Email Announcements

A free email service that alerts subscribers to TLC programming updates, breaking news in the field: research advances, and regional events.

[Sign up here.](#)

INSPIRING HOPE.

EMPOWERING HEALING.

STRONGER TOGETHER!



Get Involved

If you or someone you love is affected by a BFRB:

The TLC Foundation for BFRBs is a donor-supported nonprofit organization. The life-changing programs we offer are available thanks to people like you, supporting this vital work. Your tax-deductible support ensures that The TLC Foundation for BFRBs can continue providing outreach and educational services for these disorders, and support healing through community connection. Please consider making a [one-time gift](#) or making a [recurring monthly gift](#) to help TLC continue to transform lives.

If you are a clinician who treats individuals with BFRBs or wishes to learn more about treatment:

[Join our referral listings](#) and help provide patients access to treatment and support. Read our publications and attend our training programs to improve your ability to identify and effectively treat hair pulling, skin picking, and related body-focused repetitive behaviors. Learn to recognize the signs of BFRBs and how to treat them.

If you are a researcher:

[Become a Professional Member](#) and stay up-to-date on the latest research and treatment developments. Participate in breaking new ground in the treatment of body-focused repetitive behaviors—a category of disorders on the obsessive-compulsive spectrum affecting at least 3% of the population.

If you are a cosmetologist, esthetician, dermatologist, or other personal care provider:

[Become a Service Provider Member](#). Going to a cosmetologist, esthetician, dermatologist, or other care provider is one of the day-to-day necessities that can be emotionally challenging for individuals experiencing BFRBs. Help alleviate this problem by joining a network of BFRB-friendly service salons, cosmetologists, estheticians, life coaches, and other personal care providers.

More ways to help:

[Share your story](#): Inspire others and give hope by sharing your personal BFRB story. If TLC has impacted your life, we want to know.

[Give a presentation](#) at your school or for a community group.

[Shop for the cause](#): Amazon.com and many other sites will donate a portion of proceeds to TLC.

"The support and community provided by the TLC Foundation 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

