

Keep your English up to date

Binge

Professor David Crystal

Going on 'a binge' has a long linguistic history. It means 'a heavy drinking bout', and goes right back to the 1850s, both as a noun and as a verb – you didn't need the word 'drinking', 'binge' meant drinking in those days.

But, you see, in recent times, all sorts of other meanings have come along. In the 1970s, people referred to eating heavily as 'binge eating' – it was a disorder, an actual medical condition, you would see a doctor about it.

And then, the wheel turned full circle. 'Binge drinking' – people who drink in order to get drunk, drinking large quantities quickly, and for fun. And so you get other uses then like, 'he's a binge drinker' or 'they're binge drinkers'. And then, not just alcoholic drink, any kind of stuff you put into our body. Somebody was on a caffeine binge – too much coffee. A chocolate binge – too much chocolate. People now go on binge shopping sprees - binge shopping. And also, of course, you get it in the context of drugs - cocaine binge, crack binge.

And the people who do these things? They're bingers.



bbclearningenglish.com

© British Broadcasting Corporation 2005