

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

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What is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)?

As the name implies, it is a condition that is characterized by chronic need to participate in behaviors that are either “obsessive” or “compulsive.”

Obsessions:

- Fears about cleanliness and sanitation, worries about immoral thoughts, desire for orderliness or symmetry, and fear about causing harm to self or harm to others

Compulsions:

- Repetitive cleaning behaviors such as hand-washing, trying to force positive thoughts into mind to replace intrusive, unpleasant ones, ordering and rearranging objects, and rechecking tasks to be sure they were done properly (checking locks, opening/closing doors, etc.)

Standard Treatments

Most people with OCD will start with individual psychotherapy

- Therapy is generally directed around trying to understand the common thought processes that cause the greatest distress to the person and guiding them on how to correct them

Many will also use medication to augment the effects of therapy

- Usually starting with SSRI medications (fluoxetine [Prozac], paroxetine [Paxil], sertraline [Zoloft], citalopram [Celexa], escitalopram [Lexapro])
- Some people may have better responses with alternatives such as SNRI's (venlafaxine), tricyclic antidepressants (clomipramine [Anafranil]), and antipsychotic medications combined with SSRI's (risperidone [Risperdal])

What can be done outside of those treatments?

There are many activities that can be helpful in fighting against the intrusive thoughts and feelings that many people with OCD struggle with daily

- **Exercise**
 - Physical activity can be very helpful in reducing stress, improving energy, and causing a distraction
- **Proper Sleep**
 - Effective sleep is essential for all aspects of mental health. Establishing a sleep routine that works for you can quickly reduce stressors and improve daily function.
- **Healthy Diet**
 - A well-balanced diet is a good way to set your body up to minimize anxiety and maximize stability in your thoughts. Choices like reduced caffeine intake can prevent exacerbating racing thoughts.
- **Stress management**
 - Breathing exercises, yoga, muscle relaxation, and spending time outdoors getting fresh air are all good ways to allow stress to leave your body.
- **Support**
 - Find someone or a group of people that understand your struggles. Nobody will understand what you are going through more than someone else who is going through it too. Others may have strategies they find to be helpful for them, and having someone around to be there for you is always a plus no matter what you are going through.