**🧠 N-Acetylcysteine (NAC) for OCD and Intrusive Thoughts**

**What is NAC?**
N-Acetylcysteine (NAC) is a naturally occurring compound that supports brain and nervous system health. It regulates **glutamate**, a brain chemical involved in obsessive and compulsive thinking, and boosts **glutathione**, a key antioxidant that protects brain cells from stress.

**🔍 How Can NAC Help With OCD?**

OCD involves an overactive brain loop (the **cortico-striatal-thalamo-cortical circuit**). NAC helps restore balance to this loop by:

* Modulating glutamate levels
* Reducing oxidative stress and neuroinflammation
* Supporting emotional regulation and cognitive flexibility

NAC has been shown to help reduce:

* **Intrusive thoughts**
* **Compulsive rituals** (e.g., checking, repeating)
* **Related behaviors** like skin picking or hair pulling

**📊 What Does the Research Say?**

* **Grant et al. (2009)**: Double-blind, placebo-controlled trial found NAC significantly reduced trichotillomania symptoms at doses up to 2,400 mg/day.
* **Afshar et al. (2012)**: RCT of 48 patients with OCD showed that NAC (2,000 mg/day) as an add-on to fluvoxamine led to significant symptom reduction compared to placebo.
* **Costa et al. (2017)**: Systematic review concluded NAC is a promising adjunctive treatment in OCD-spectrum and impulse-control disorders.
* **Sarris et al. (2015)**: Meta-analysis supported NAC’s efficacy in several psychiatric conditions, including OCD, with low side effect burden.

**💊 How to Use NAC**

**Target Dose:** 2,400–3,000 mg/day (divided into 2–3 doses)
Start low to minimize GI side effects. Here’s a sample titration plan:

| **Week** | **Dose (mg)** | **Frequency** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 600 mg | Twice daily |
| 2 | 1,200 mg | Twice daily |
| 3+ | 1,200 mg | Three times daily (as tolerated) |

**Take with food** to avoid stomach upset.

**✅ What to Expect**

**Potential Benefits:**

* Reduced OCD symptoms
* Improved emotional regulation
* Better focus and clarity

**Possible Side Effects:**

* Nausea or bloating
* Headache
* Rare allergic reactions

**🧭 Tips for Best Results**

* Take NAC consistently each day.
* Use alongside therapy, such as CBT or ERP.
* Track symptoms weekly.
* Discuss progress with your provider.

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**📚 References**

1. **Grant JE, Odlaug BL, Kim SW. *N-acetylcysteine, a glutamate modulator, in the treatment of trichotillomania: a double-blind, placebo-controlled study.* Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2009 Jul;66(7):756–763.**
2. **Afshar H, Roohafza H, Mohammad-Beigi H, et al. *N-acetylcysteine add-on treatment in refractory obsessive-compulsive disorder: a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial.* J Clin Psychopharmacol. 2012 Jun;32(3):797–803.**
3. **Costa DL, Diniz JB, Requena G, et al. *Randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of N-acetylcysteine for treatment-resistant obsessive-compulsive disorder.* J Clin Psychiatry. 2017;78(7):e766–e773.**
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