

When Does

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Begin?

OCD can start at any time from preschool age to adulthood (usually by age 40).

One-third to one-half of adults with OCD report that it started during childhood. Unfortunately, OCD often goes unrecognized. On average, people with OCD see three to four doctors and spend over nine years seeking treatment before they receive a correct diagnosis. Studies have also found that it takes an average of 17 years from the time OCD begins for people to obtain appropriate treatment.

Treatment for OCD

Talk to your doctor about your unwanted thoughts, fears, and repeated actions. Tell your doctor if these thoughts and repeated actions keep you from doing everyday things and living your life. Ask your doctor for a checkup to make sure you don't have some other illness. Ask your doctor if he or she has helped people with OCD. Special training helps doctors treat people with OCD. If your doctor doesn't have special training, ask for the name of a doctor or counselor who does.

Talking to a specially trained doctor or counselor helps many people with OCD. Therapy helps you learn to stop doing the repeated actions. Therapy also teaches you ways to lower and cope with your anxiety. The doctor may give you medicine to help you get rid of your unwanted thoughts and repeated actions. Medicine can also help you feel less anxious and afraid. But it may take a few weeks for the medicine to work.

You may feel alone if you are dealing with OCD, but you're not. Support groups are a great way to

get support and make friendships with other people with OCD. Your ongoing treatment is important to coping with OCD, too — if you feel like quitting treatment because of the side effects of medication or because you feel uncomfortable, talk to your doctor right away about your feelings. Having OCD doesn't mean you're crazy. Remember — OCD isn't your fault and it isn't something you need to hide or keep secret, even if you are embarrassed or ashamed — with help, you will feel more comfortable and have more time to spend doing things you enjoy.

Help Is Available

Just talking about your problems sometimes leads to new solutions. If you or someone you know needs information, guidance or help, contact the resource and number listed below or look in the yellow pages for local professionals who can help.

WorkLife Solutions

Employee Assistance Program

(330) 965-1234

www.eap4me.com

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OBSESSIVE- COMPULSIVE DISORDER



What Is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder?

Do you feel trapped in a pattern of unwanted and upsetting thoughts? Does anything in the following statements sound like situations you have experienced frequently?

- I have upsetting thoughts or images enter my mind again and again.
- I feel like I can't stop these thoughts or images, even though I want to.
- I have a hard time stopping myself from doing things again and again, like: counting, checking on things, washing my hands, rearranging objects, doing things until it feels right, collecting useless objects.
- I worry a lot about terrible things that could happen if I'm not careful.
- I have unwanted urges to hurt someone but know I never would.

If you have experienced any of these problems, you may have obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Worries, doubts, and superstitious beliefs are all common in everyday life. However, when they become so excessive, such as hours of hand washing or make no sense at all, such as driving around and around the block to check that an accident didn't occur, then a diagnosis of OCD may be made.

Obsessions and Compulsions

OCD is a real illness. If you have OCD, you have repeated, upsetting thoughts. You do the same thing over and over again to make the thoughts go away. You feel like you cannot control these thoughts or actions. The upsetting thoughts and images are called **obsessions**.

Examples of obsessions include a fear of germs, a fear of being hurt, a fear of hurting others, and disturbing religious or sexual thoughts.

The actions you take over and over again to make the thoughts go away are called **compulsions**. Examples of these repeated actions include counting, cleaning, and checking on things. OCD usually involves having both obsessions and compulsions, though a person with OCD may sometimes have only one or the other.

Some Common Obsessions Are:

- Contamination fears of germs, dirt, etc.
- Imagining having harmed self or others
- Imagining losing control or aggressive urges
- Intrusive sexual thoughts or urges
- Excessive religious or moral doubt
- Forbidden thoughts
- A need to have things "just so"
- A need to tell, ask, confess

Some Common Compulsions Are:

- Washing
- Repeating
- Checking
- Touching
- Counting
- Ordering/arranging
- Hoarding or saving
- Praying

Many people with OCD know that their actions are not normal, and they may try to hide their problem from family and friends. Some people with OCD may have trouble keeping their jobs and friends because of their actions.

OCD symptoms can occur in people of all ages. Not all obsessive-compulsive behaviors represent an illness. Some rituals (e.g., bedtime songs, religious practices) are a welcome part of daily life. Normal worries, such as contamination fears, may increase during times of stress, such as when someone in the family is sick or dying. Only when symptoms persist, make no sense, cause much distress, or interfere with functioning do they need clinical attention.

Other Complications of OCD

OCD symptoms cause distress, take up a lot of time (more than an hour a day), or significantly interfere with a person's work, social life, or relationships.

Most individuals with OCD recognize at some point that their obsessions are coming from within their own minds and are not just excessive worries about real problems, and that the compulsions they perform are excessive or unreasonable. Other mental disorders that may fall within the spectrum of obsessive-compulsive disorder include compulsive hair pulling, compulsive shoplifting, gambling, and sexual behavior disorders.