

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

WHAT IS OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)?

Obsessions are thoughts, images or impulses that keep coming back and cannot be controlled. They bother you and get in the way of daily tasks. Compulsions are actions/behaviours a person does repeatedly. They hope these behaviours will make the obsessions go away, but they are usually not helpful and cause them to feel worse and more anxious.



OCD is a psychiatric (mental health) condition where a person has very strong and unsettling obsessions and/or compulsions. These thoughts and actions are very intense and take up a lot of time, making it difficult for the person to live their life normally or do their daily tasks.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF OCD

Examples of Obsessions:

- **Contamination:** Fear of getting germs from shaking hands or touching objects that others have touched.
- **Doubting:** Having repeated doubts that the door is locked, the windows are closed, or the stove is turned off. Having repeated doubts that you did your work wrongly.
- **Insistence on symmetry:** Feeling very upset when things are not organised a specific way.
- **Sexuality:** Repeated images in the mind (e.g. pornographic images).
- **Aggression:** Having unwanted and repetitive thoughts of wanting to hurt someone.

Examples of Compulsions:

- Repeated urge to wash and clean excessively that may result in dry skin or dermatitis (inflamed, itchy and irritated skin).
- Repeated checking of doors or windows before leaving the house that causes one to be frequently late for appointments.
- Arranging items over and over again in a specific way.

About Compulsions

With compulsions, one may feel the urge to perform a specific routine or follow certain numbers. For example, they may wash their hands in a certain manner or wash their hands repeatedly until reaching a "magical number". If this process is interrupted, they feel the need to restart the entire action.



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MANAGEMENT OF OCD

The most effective way to treat OCD is by using both medication and psychotherapy together.

MEDICATION

Medications like antidepressants have been shown to be effective in treating OCD. Examples of these medications include Clomipramine, Fluoxetine, and Fluvoxamine.

Your doctor will adjust the doses as needed, and often, higher doses are necessary to effectively treat OCD as compared to treating depression.



PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT

A type of psychotherapy known as “Exposure Response Prevention” is useful in treating patients with OCD. During this therapy, the patient is deliberately exposed to situations or things that trigger their obsessions.

They are then guided and taught how to cope with the resulting anxiety without engaging in compulsive rituals (routines).



If you think you are experiencing these symptoms, it is best to seek help from a mental health professional. They can guide you in finding the right treatment that best suits your needs.



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