



What is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder?

Obsessive-compulsive disorder affects nearly 3% of people globally.

1. Introduction

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a mental health disorder characterized by patterns of unwanted, intrusive thoughts and fears, or obsessions, that cause difficulties and stress in daily life. These obsessions may include fears of contaminated substances or things, fear of harming yourself or others, fear of being responsible for something terrible, and many more. Compulsions, as a result, are repetitive behaviors that a person with OCD feels they need to do to counteract their fear. For example, repetitive handwashing can be the compulsion for someone with a contamination obsession.

2. Types

The types of OCD are classified based on various types of obsessions. These groups include four main types.

Harm obsession: Those with a harm obsession fear they may hurt themselves, others, or be responsible for something terrible that harms others.

Contamination obsession: This obsession leads individuals to fear touching germs, fluids or other things that may be contaminated.

Hoarding obsession: Though not every case of hoarding may involve OCD, those who experience a hoarding obsession fear tossing various objects, whether it's a tool or old clothes, because they may be useful.

Symmetry obsession: Many people feel things may not be just right if an item is out of place, but those with this obsession feel an all-consuming need to fix it so everything feels "just right".

3. Risk Factors

Though the cause hasn't been identified, possible risks for developing OCD include

- + Family history of OCD
- + Traumatic or stressful life events
- + History of other mental health conditions

4. Treatment

Since there is no cure for OCD, treatment focuses on treating the symptoms and improving the patient's quality of life. Psychotherapy, such as CBT or ERP, slowly exposes patients to their fears over time, aiming to control the obsessions and compulsions. Some medications may also be prescribed with a similar aim of controlling symptoms.

Did you know?

OCD symptoms start earlier in boys, but more women have their symptoms develop by 25.

For more information on OCD, please visit the [International OCD Foundation](#).

References:

Overview of OCD: [Mayo Clinic](#)

Types of OCD: [Eating Recovery Center](#)

OCD statistics: [Harvard Health Publishing](#)

Types of obsessions: [International OCD Foundation](#)

OCD symptoms, causes, and treatments: [Boston Children's Hospital](#)