

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) Education



What is OCD?

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a chronic disorder characterized by the presence of intrusive, unwanted thoughts and repetitive behaviors. This disorder can cause a significant reduction in the quality of life and interferes with daily functioning. While up to 70% of patients suffering from OCD can experience a reduction of symptoms with treatment, fewer achieve a complete remission of symptoms.



The disorder is characterized by:

Obsessive thoughts-intrusive thoughts or images which provoke anxiety and distress. Common types of obsessional thoughts include:

- Contamination concerns, worries about germs, cleanliness
- Doubting
- Scrupulosity: a need to do the right thing or fears of committing a transgression (commonly associated with religious concerns)
- Intrusive thoughts of aggression to self or to another person or unwanted sexual thoughts or images which the individual may believe to be taboo
- Concerns for symmetry
- Safety

These thoughts or intrusive images cannot be controlled even when the individual recognizes them as irrational or out of proportion. The individual may try to suppress these anxiety and distress-provoking thoughts. The person often responds to the thoughts or images by performing a behavior or action (Compulsive behaviors) that has a goal to prevent distress or to neutralize or prevent potential harm.

- Cleaning, washing
- Touching or tapping
- Checking
- Arranging
- Seeking Reassurance
- Counting
- Mental actions might include prayer, or saying a word or phrases repeatedly

OCD Education

OCD often occurs with other disorders such as:



- Anxiety disorders (Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder)
- Mood Disorder
- Eating Disorders
- Tics
- ADHD
- Impulse Control Disorders such as Trichotillomania
- Body Dysmorphic Disorder
- Excoriation Disorder (skin picking)
- Tourette's

Treatments for OCD

For many who struggle with OCD, no single treatment will be enough. Many patients find that combining different treatment modalities offers the best chance at an optimal outcome.

Medications

Medications may help decrease the severity of symptoms. Commonly used medications are serotonin reuptake inhibitor medications. Clomipramine is a tricyclic medication which may be effective, but usually has more unpleasant side effects. Up to half of patients may continue to struggle with symptoms after a full course of medication.

Therapy

Response Prevention and exposure therapy and other forms of CBT therapy can be very helpful in reducing symptom severity.

TMS Therapy

In 2018, the FDA approved deep-TMS for adjunct treatment in OCD. TMS strategically targets the areas of the brain that are involved in thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. TMS offers a new tool in the treatment of OCD. It is a safe outpatient treatment option with a more favorable side effect profile compared to medications.