

# **OBSESSIVE - COMPULSIVE** Disorder



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# OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterised by repetitive, unwanted, intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and irrational, excessive urges to do certain actions (compulsions). Although people with OCD may know that their thoughts and behaviour don't make sense, they are often unable to stop them. An example is a person with an unreasonable fear of germs who constantly washes their hands.

Symptoms typically begin during childhood, the teenage years or young adulthood, although males often develop them at a younger age than females.

## SYMPTOMS

Most people have occasional obsessive thoughts or compulsive behaviours. In an obsessive-compulsive disorder, however, these symptoms generally last more than an hour each day and interfere with daily life.

### **Examples of obsessions include:**

- Thoughts about harming or having harmed someone
- Doubts about having done something right, like turning off the stove or locking a door
- Unpleasant sexual images
- Fears of saying or shouting inappropriate things in public

Compulsions are repetitive acts that temporarily relieve the stress brought on by an obsession.

### **Examples of compulsions include:**

- Hand washing due to a fear of germs
- Counting and recounting money because a person is can't be sure they added correctly
- Checking to see if a door is locked or the stove is off
- "Mental checking" that goes with intrusive thoughts is also a form of compulsion

## RELATED CONDITIONS:

- Body Dysmorphic Disorder
- Hoarding Disorder
- Trichotillomania

## Body Dysmorphic Disorder

This disorder is characterised by an obsession with physical appearance. Unlike simple vanity, BDD is characterised by obsessing over one's appearance and body image, often for many hours a day. Any perceived flaws cause significant distress and ultimately impede on the person's ability to function. In some extreme cases, BDD can lead to bodily injury either due to infection because of skin picking, excessive exercise, or from having unnecessary surgical procedures to change one's appearance.

## Hoarding Disorder

This disorder is defined by the drive to collect a large amount of useless or valueless items, coupled with extreme distress at the idea of throwing anything away. Over time, this situation can render a space unhealthy or dangerous to be in.

Hoarding disorder can negatively impact someone emotionally, physically, socially and financially, and often leads to distress and disability. In addition, many hoarders cannot see that their actions are potentially harmful, and so may resist diagnosis or treatment.

## Trichotillomania

Many people develop unhealthy habits such as nail biting or teeth grinding, especially during periods of high stress. Trichotillomania, however, is the compulsive urge to pull out (and possibly eat) your own hair, including eyelashes and eyebrows. Some people may consciously pull out their hair, while others may not even be aware that they are doing it.

Trichotillomania can create serious injuries, such as repetitive motion injury in the arm or hand, or, if the hair is repeatedly swallowed, the formation of hairballs in the stomach, which can be life threatening if left untreated. A similar illness is excoriation disorder, which is the compulsive urge to scratch or pick at the skin.