

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Information for patients and families

Read this pamphlet to learn more about:

- causes of OCD
- signs to watch for
- treatments available



What is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD?)

OCD is a mental illness that causes anxiety. People with OCD have repeated, upsetting thoughts or images that may make them do things over and over.

The upsetting thoughts or images are called obsessions. The actions that are done over and over again to make the thoughts go away are called compulsions.

These actions give only give brief relief from anxiety. Many people with OCD know that their actions are not normal but they cannot stop or control them. OCD can be so severe that it stops people from having a normal life.

What causes OCD?

There is no one reason why someone develops OCD. Family history, brain chemistry and stress play a big role in producing the illness.

OCD happens to people of all ages, but symptoms are usually first seen in teens and young adults.

Signs and symptoms

Examples of obsessions

- Keeping things neat or in a special order
- Fear of germs
- Fear of being hurt
- Fear of hurting others
- Upsetting thoughts about sex
- Upsetting thoughts about religion

Examples of compulsions

Doing any of these things over and over:

- Washing hands
- Cleaning
- Counting
- Arranging things
- Repeating words silently
- Praying

Checking things (such as whether the stove is off or the door is locked)

What are the treatments?

OCD generally responds well to treatment, such as medication and psychotherapy.

- Medication will help reduce anxiety, unwanted thoughts and repeated actions.
- A type of psychotherapy called Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT) teaches how to deal with anxiety and how to stop doing the repeated actions.

Support from family, friends and self-help groups can also be very helpful.

Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for more health information.

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