

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

DID YOU KNOW? ...

Research tells us that many of the unusual thoughts that people with OCD struggle with are common. The difference is, people with OCD “respond differently” to those thoughts than other people.

“I had been suffering from OCD for many years, but didn't tell anyone because I thought people would perceive me as “crazy”. My OCD symptoms got to the point where I could not function as well as I used to at work and it was really causing a strain on my marriage. I went and saw my GP and a Clinical Psychologist and I was treated with both medication and a psychological treatment called exposure and response prevention. Now, I can manage my OCD symptoms and they no longer affect my life!”

Charles, 45 years old



About Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder. People with OCD experience repetitive and unwanted thoughts which cause them to feel anxious or distressed (these are obsessions), and complete repetitive and time consuming behaviours or mental rituals as a way to cope with or reduce this anxiety (these are compulsions).

OCD is very common. It affects about 2% of the population in Australia (that's 1 in every 50 people). The symptoms of OCD can be managed with treatment.

Recognising OCD

Each person with OCD has very different symptoms, but they usually include very similar themes. Some of the main themes seen in obsessions include:

1. **Harming/Doubting Obsessions.** These include concerns about causing harm to themselves or to others on purpose, or because they are not careful enough.
2. **Contamination Obsessions.** These include concerns about becoming

contaminated from dirt or germs, bodily waste or secretions, or environmental contaminants (such as household cleaners, asbestos etc).

3. **Ordering/Arranging Obsessions.** These include a need for things to be symmetrical, ordered, or perfect, to prevent bad things happening or because it just feels “right”.
4. **Unacceptable Thoughts.** These include repetitive and upsetting thoughts, images, or urges of a religious, sexual or aggressive nature.

Some of the things people with OCD might do to try to cope with their anxiety or distress (their compulsions) include:

1. Excessive checking, washing, cleaning and arranging,
2. Repeating routine activities.
3. They may also have mental activities they must do such as saying a silent prayer or repeating ‘safe’ words or phrases.
4. People with OCD also tend to try to avoid situations that provoke their obsessions/anxiety.

Treatment for OCD

OCD symptoms can be managed with treatment. There are two types of treatments that have been shown to

be most effective at reducing the symptoms of OCD:

1. **Medication.** Medication can help people control symptoms of OCD.
2. **Psychological Treatments.** These involve learning about your symptoms, learning how to control those symptoms, and gradually confronting your fears. This treatment is called **Exposure and Response Prevention** (or ERP for short). Psychological techniques are effective for people with all types of symptoms of OCD.

You can talk to your GP about getting a referral to a Clinical Psychologist, Psychiatrist, or another mental health professional to learn to manage your OCD. Or, you can try an Internet-based treatment program.

What should I do if I think I have OCD?

It is essential to get a proper diagnosis and a referral to the right treatment. Start with your GP and talk to them about the possibility that you might be suffering from OCD. Your GP will be able to arrange a referral to a Psychiatrist (a doctor who specializes in mental health), or a trained OCD treatment specialist (such as a Clinical Psychologist). Rebates are available from Medicare or consultations are free at most public health services.



Things that people find helpful include:

Remind yourself that unwanted thoughts are normal. The unwanted thoughts that people experience in OCD are actually a really common occurrence. Up to 95% of the population have these thoughts. The only difference is that people with OCD respond to these thoughts differently to people without OCD.

Remind yourself that you are not alone. Remember that OCD affects 1 in 50 people in Australia. It is a common anxiety disorder.

Avoid Avoiding! People with OCD often avoid certain people and places because of their fears. It is important that you start to gradually confront these things, beginning with the easiest things. This will help your confidence that you can learn to successfully manage OCD.

Remind yourself that there is something you can do. Recovering from OCD is hard work and unfortunately there is no magic cure. Our experience is that recovery is usually a case of two steps forward and one step backwards. But persevere, and you can succeed at learning to overcome your OCD symptoms.

How can I help someone with OCD?

People with OCD can often feel extremely uncomfortable talking about their symptoms in detail. It is important to take this into consideration when talking to friends and loved ones about their symptoms. Encourage your friend or loved one to seek treatment and offer to support them through the treatment process.

It can also be helpful to remind your friend or loved one that lots of people suffer from OCD and that they are not alone.

eCentreClinic Courses: The OCD Course

The eCentreClinic provides a course via the internet to treat OCD. This program is called The OCD Course and is suitable for people aged 18 years and over.

Research has shown that the skills taught in our course are effective at reducing symptoms of OCD. 100% of participants in a trial of an early version of the OCD Course reported that they would recommend the course to a friend and was worth their time.

By providing good education and guidance on simple but effective treatment techniques we hope that you will get better control over your symptoms, improve your confidence, and get back to living a full and happy life.

This information is not a substitute for independent professional advice. Nothing contained in this material is intended to be used as medical advice and it is not intended to be used to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease, nor should it be used for therapeutic purposes or as a substitute for your own health professional's advice.

FOR MORE
INFORMATION



To find out more about our course for OCD, please visit www.ecentreclinic.org

International OCD Foundation: www.ocfoundation.org

For assistance in overcoming your OCD you can access either a psychologist or general practitioner (GP) in your area. You can find a psychologist in your area on the following websites:

- Australian Clinical Psychologists Association: www.acpa.org.au
- Australian Psychological Society: www.psychology.org

You can find a General Practitioner in your area on the following website:

- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners: <http://www.racgp.org.au/findapractice>