

# Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

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## What is OCD

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a common, chronic, and long-lasting disorder where individuals experience a pattern of unwanted intrusive thoughts (obsessions) that lead to repetitive and sometimes ritualistic behaviours (compulsions). These obsessions and compulsions differ from the usual thoughts and actions of the general population in the sense that individuals with OCD often cannot control these behaviours, even with the knowledge that they are excessive. Ultimately, they feel driven to perform these compulsive acts as it helps alleviate the stress associated with the various obsessions

### Obsessions associated with OCD

Questioning if you performed an act (locking a door, turning off the oven)

Needing things orderly and symmetrical

Unpleasant, intrusive thoughts involving sex, religion or aggression

Fear of germs

### Compulsions associated with OCD

Repeatedly checking on various objects (doors, ovens)

Ritualistic counting and arranging of numerous objects

Repeating words or phrases

Excessive cleaning and hand washing

## Causes

Traumatic life experience  
High levels of stress or anxiety  
Brain chemistry and genetics

**Despite these symptoms and the burden that the disorder places on individuals, many often go undiagnosed and unrecognized by others**



## Treating OCD

Nowadays, OCD can be treated using a range of different interventions such as, pharmacotherapy, specialized psychotherapy, and anatomically targeted treatments

These can range from various cognitive behavioral therapies to the use of medications which have both been shown to provide some relief from the symptoms of OCD when used on their own and in conjunction with one another

## Therapies

The most effective of the cognitive behavioral therapies include **exposure and response prevention (ERP)** which involves individuals with OCD being exposed to their fear stimuli, whilst refraining from carrying out their ritualistic compulsions

This method of treatment has been highly effective in relieving symptoms and has been shown to significantly improve symptoms for up to two years in some cases

## Coping with OCD

OCD can often take over your life and leave you feeling helpless, however there are a number of things you can do to help manage the symptoms and improve your wellbeing and mental health

Build a support system around you with family and friends

Practice relaxation techniques to help manage stress

Remember to exercise and eat healthy

Always reach out to others or to professional help in times of need

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## Medications



Medications have also shown to be useful in the treatment of OCD

Your GP will work with you and help you find the right medication that works best for you in helping to reduce the symptoms of depression