



# MENTAL HEALTH

## FAST FACTS ABOUT OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

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### WHAT IS OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER?

OCD is an anxiety disorder in which the brain gets stuck on a particular thought or urge and can't let go. OCD manifests itself in obsessive thinking or beliefs that tell a child: "If you don't do X, then something uncomfortable or even life-threatening will happen." Younger children will not find the compulsions foolish or excessive. However, by adolescence, those with OCD often feel that the obsessions and compulsions are foolish or excessive-yet the person usually cannot avoid them for long without great effort.

Obsessions are repeated thoughts or impulses that are out of place - they cause the child to experience anxiety or distress. Common obsessions in children are aggressive themes, forbidden thoughts, sexual themes, and contamination themes. They are out of the child's control, and they are different from normal thoughts.

Compulsions, or rituals, are the deliberate and repeated behaviors a child with OCD performs to relieve the anxiety caused by the obsessive thoughts. Common compulsions are hand washing, putting things in order, and checking things, praying, counting, and repeating words silently.

These obsessions or compulsions can cause emotional pain, take up a lot of time, and disrupt the child's normal routine of school or social life. When disruptions occur, it is recommended that the child or adolescent be referred to a mental health provider.

### RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

**Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Foundation, Inc.**

P.O. Box 70

Milford, CT 06460

203-878-5669

[www.ocfoundation.org](http://www.ocfoundation.org)

**Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA)**

6000 Executive Blvd.

Rockville, MD 20852

301-231-9350

[www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)