

# FACTS ABOUT OCD

## WHAT IS OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER?

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a type of anxiety disorder comprising two main components: obsessions and compulsions.

Obsessions are unwanted and intrusive repetitive thoughts, images or urges that create distress or anxiety. Physical objects, situations or smells may trigger them.

Compulsions are repetitive or ritualistic thoughts or behaviours an individual performs to suppress the obsessions and provide relief. Common compulsions include excessive hand washing, showering, checking and repeating rituals.

These compulsions and obsessions may take up many hours of a person's day and can cause extreme frustration and anxiety.

It affects approximately 2% of Australians at any one time, with many having an intense fear of something terrible happening to themselves or others should they not perform certain rituals.

Sufferers are typically aware of the irrationality and excessive nature of their compulsive behaviours and obsessive thoughts, but feel unable to control them or limit their intrusiveness.

Due to the overwhelming and consuming nature of OCD, it can have a severe impact on all aspects of a person's life and functioning.

## SYMPTOMS

Unwanted and repetitive obsessions and compulsions. The frequency and intensity may vary over time, and can often increase during times of stress.

- Distress and anxiety
- Disgust and guilt
- Frustration
- Fear of harm or illness to self or others
- Disturbing and distressing thoughts

- Concern for symmetry and orderliness
- Intrusive sexual thoughts
- Thoughts of hurting or injuring people
- Superstition or religion
- Excessive hand washing and cleaning
- Checking on something repeatedly
- Tapping
- Arranging items in a certain order
- Repeatedly checking doors and windows are locked
- Continuous counting
- Repeating words a certain number of times
- Touching a particular item repeatedly
- Hoarding

## CAUSES

The causes remain unclear, although research has linked OCD with brain abnormalities, genetics and hereditary factors. Stressful life events, personality traits and hormones may also affect the onset of OCD

## TREATMENT

- Psychological intervention and/or counselling
- Psychiatric treatment
- Medication
- Relaxation and meditation
- Support groups

## HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

Adopt a healthy lifestyle including diet and exercise, and make time to relax and meditate. Talking to somebody such as family, friends or a counsellor may help.

## HOW CAN FAMILY AND FRIENDS HELP?

It is important that family and friends be caring and supportive. This can mean being there to listen, show empathy, help, and being someone they can turn to and trust. OCD can cause significant interference in family and social relationships, daily routines, and may intrude into every activity and action.

## REFERRAL/SUPPORT INFO

**Drug ARM** 1300 656 800  
info@drugarm.com.au  
drugarm.com.au

**Drug ARM Central Intake**  
07 3620 8880

**Lifeline Australia** 13 11 14  
24/7 crisis support

**Or contact your local GP (General Practitioner)**

---

## REFERENCES

1 Crino, R. (2014). Treatment guidance for common mental health disorders: obsessive-compulsive disorder. InPsych October 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.psychology.org.au/Content.aspx?ID=6212>



AWARENESS  
REHABILITATION  
MANAGEMENT

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
CONTACT THE DRUGARM LIBRARY  
[LIBRARY@DRUGARM.COM.AU](mailto:LIBRARY@DRUGARM.COM.AU)

Drug ARM proudly supports the Australian Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and LGBTQ+ communities.

