

## Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

### Overview:

- It is a combination of illogical thoughts and compulsory behavior resulting from anxiety.
- OCD symptoms vary among people.
- The main characteristic of the disease is that it hinders daily tasks and wastes a lot of time.
- here are two basic types followed in the treatment, namely, psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy.
- There are many ways for a patient to deal with their condition, and for others to cooperate.

### Definition:

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a type of mental disorder associated with anxiety, characterized by illogical (and obsessive) thoughts and fears that lead to compulsory repetition of certain behaviors, impeding daily life. Sometimes people with obsessive-compulsive disorder are aware of the fact that their obsessive behaviors are illogical and try to ignore or change them. However, these attempts increase feelings of malaise and anxiety. Therefore, they are compulsory to alleviate anxiety.

### Causes:

There is no clear cause of obsessive-compulsive disorder, and theories about the possible causative factors of OCD include:

- Biological factors: May be the result of a chemical change taking place in the brain.
- Genetic factors
- Environmental factors: May be the result of infections.

### Symptoms:

OCD symptoms, which are annoying thoughts and compulsive behaviors, vary among people,

Most common annoying thoughts:

- Fear of dirt or contamination.
- Fear of incurring diseases.
- Fear of harming oneself or others
- Fear of making mistakes
- Fear of embarrassment or of failure and involvement in inappropriate public behavior.
- Fear of bad thoughts or feeling of sin.
- Exaggerated need for organization, integration, and accuracy.

### Most common compulsive behaviors:

- Repetitive ablution and praying.
- Bathing more than once, or washing hands frequently.
- Refraining from shaking hands with others or touching the door knob.
- Excessive checking on things, such as locks or gas stoves.
- Counting continuously - either silently or loudly - during normal daily chores.
- Stressing the order and organization of personal items permanently and consistently.
- Eating a certain and fixed set of foods, in a consistent order.
- Stuttering during conversation, coupled with disturbing imaginations and thoughts that do not disappear on their own, and would cause sleep disorders.
- Repeating certain words or terms.
- Feeling the need to do the same tasks several times (such as prayer and ablution).
- Collecting and keeping items that have no apparent value.

### When to see a doctor:

The majority may develop obsessive behaviors at some point in their lives or may be part of their personality, but that does not necessarily mean they have OCD, as the main characteristic of the disease is that it hinders daily tasks and wastes a lot of time.

### Diagnosis:

- Clinical examination.
- Laboratory tests
- Psychological assessment
- Use of measurements and criteria for mental disorders.

### Risk factors:

- Family history.
- A life of stress and pressure, trauma or painful events.
- Suffering other mental illnesses.
- OCD may worsen after pregnancy.

### Complications:

- Disturbed social relations
- Inability to go to work or school.
- Depression and other psychological disorders.
- Suicidal thoughts and actions.
- Dermatitis due to constant hand washing.

### Treatment:

Treatment varies according to the severity of the condition and the extent of its effect on the life of the patient. There are two basic types followed in the treatment, namely, psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy.

- **Psychotherapy for obsessive-compulsive disorder:**

In non severe cases, the method of (exposure and response prevention) will be used, by having the patient experience obsession triggers and preventing them from correcting or putting them properly.

Another method called educational / cognitive behavioral therapy is the most successful among children and adults alike.

In severe cases treatment may take several months to be effective.

- **Pharmacotherapy for obsessive-compulsive disorder:**

Medications may be used in advanced cases, often starting with antidepressants, and as the condition progresses, sedatives are used to address the effects of anxiety.

Be careful not to stop medications without consulting your doctor even if there is an improvement in the condition, and be careful to use them as prescribed by your doctor.

#### Tips for OCD patients:

- Express feelings by talking to a close person, or resort to writing.
- Spend more time with family and friends to strengthen relationships with them and feel comfortable talking about obsessive thoughts, which reduces their intensity.
- Control stress, as it increases the severity of obsession, and it is recommended to exercise relaxation exercises to relieve it.
- Take enough sleep to provide the body with enough strength to deal with life's difficulties.
- Make sure to eat healthy food and maintain blood sugar levels that control mood and body energy.
- Regular exercise is useful for mental health.

### Tips on dealing with people with OCD:

- Read more about the situation to see what the patient is going through.
- Patience when dealing with the patient, and taking their fears seriously even if they seem illogical.
- Assist the patient in his affairs and arrange things as he desires.
- Reassure the patient and remind him that it is not the cause of errors or accidents.
- Help the patient to resist some compulsive acts, such as asking about the purpose of the action more than once, and reminding him that obsessions are meaningless.
- Support the patient and ask him what he needs to help him and facilitate things so as not to waste much of his time.
- Encourage the patient to follow the treatment sessions, and tell them realistic stories about successful treatment experiences.
- It is not easy to deal with the patient, so you should not neglect yourself and must take sufficient rest.

### Misconceptions:

- **Only women get OCD.**  
**Fact:** In fact, it is a disease that affects all age groups of both genders.
- **OCD is only associated to cleanliness.**  
**Fact:** Obsessions involve a lot of things and are not exclusive to cleanliness.

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