

Does this sound like you?

- I have recurrent, unwanted thoughts that won't go away
- I have the urge to perform certain behaviors such as hand washing, counting, checking, or cleaning
- I feel anxiety about the thoughts and behaviors
- My unwanted thoughts and behaviors are time-consuming and bother me

If you experience some of these concerns, you may have Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

What is OCD?

OCD is a real illness. It can be treated with medication and therapy. If you have OCD, you may have recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) or rituals (compulsions), which you feel you cannot control.

Rituals such as hand washing, counting, checking, or cleaning are often performed with the hope of preventing obsessive thoughts or making them go away. Performing these rituals, however, only provides temporary relief, and not performing them increases anxiety.

Research suggests that OCD is caused by abnormal functioning of brain circuitry. It is not caused by family problems, an emphasis on cleanliness, or a belief that certain thoughts are dangerous or unacceptable.

When does OCD start and how long does it last?

OCD typically begins during adolescence or early childhood. At least one-third of the cases of adult OCD begin in childhood. Anyone can have OCD. It affects men and women equally. It can last for many years, especially if it is untreated.

Am I the only person with this illness?

No. You are not alone. In any year, at least 3.3 million Americans (about 2.3% of the U.S. population) have OCD.

How can I help myself?

Talk to a counselor or a doctor about your concerns. Tell them if the thoughts and behaviors keep you from doing everyday things and living your life.

How can a counselor help me?

Talking to a counselor helps many people with OCD. Therapy can help you find ways to cope with the thoughts and behaviors. A doctor may give you medication. Medication may help people with OCD feel better after a few weeks. If one medication doesn't work, others should be tried.