

Tourette Canada Fact Sheets: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



What is OCD?

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, or OCD, is a condition that affects adults and children. A person with OCD experiences obsession or compulsions, or both. These obsessions and or compulsions take an hour plus of the person's time per day, cause extreme distress, or interfere with daily functioning in a significant way.

Obsessions are unwanted thoughts that happen over and over again causing a lot of stress or anxiety and ultimately resulting in attempts to either ignore the thoughts or to make them go away.

Compulsions are actions or thoughts that happen over and over again, which have the intended purpose of preventing or reducing distress, or preventing a bad situation or event from happening. Examples include checking something over and over or placing things in a particular order.



OCD & TS

Up to 30% of people with a tic disorder also have OCD. People with TS are also more likely to have OCD than people with another type of tic disorder. While it can be hard to tell the difference between a complex tic and a compulsion, complicated tics tend to happen in response to a feeling tension physically or a premonitory urge (ex., tingling up the spine or a vague feeling of discomfort). In contrast, compulsions usually happen because a person is trying to relieve anxiety. Compulsions also tend to be more elaborate than tics.

Diagnosis

OCD is diagnosed by a clinician (doctor or specialist) based on information gathered from symptom checklists and from parents, teachers, and possibly, from the person themselves (depending on age and situation).

Treatment

Possible treatments include behavior therapy like cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and exposure and response prevention (ERP), and medication. Behavior therapy is usually the first line of treatment, while medication is used in cases where a person's symptoms don't improve enough despite trying behavior therapy or where behavior therapy isn't possible.



Disclaimer: The above information is written in a modified form for accessibility purposes and is for information only. It should not be used for the purpose of self-diagnosis. If you believe that either you or a loved one has the above symptoms, consult a trained health care provider who is experienced in diagnosing and treating OCD.