

Anxiety

Panic, Worry

Obsessive-Compulsive disorder

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a common condition where unwanted thoughts or images, known as obsessions recur persistently. These obsessions cause distress to sufferers and they counteract them with other thoughts or actions known as compulsions. In Singapore, about 3% of people will suffer from OCD in their lifetime.

OCD usually begins in late adolescence or early adulthood. The distress combined with the large amount of time spent obsessing and carrying out the compulsions leads to considerable impairment in the sufferer's ability to carry out daily activities. Obsessions usually revolve around fears of dirt or germs, fears of harming others or doubt. These obsessions usually do not make sense, but the fear that something terrible will happen prompts them to neutralize the obsessions with compulsions. These compulsions may include cleaning, checking, repeating, ordering/arranging, and counting.



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Research has shown that the brains of people with OCD function in slightly different ways especially in a part of the brain just above the eyes. An increase in a chemical called serotonin has also been thought to contribute to the development of OCD. The immediate family members of an OCD sufferer are more likely to develop OCD.

Both medication and psychotherapy have been found to be effective in the treatment of OCD. Medications used in the treatment of OCD attempt to increase serotonin in synapse of the brain. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) has been found by multiple studies to be effective for the treatment of OCD. A key component is exposure and response prevention. This involves putting the OCD sufferer in contact with situations that make him or her feel anxious followed by a commitment by the sufferer to not carry out the compulsive act until there is a considerable fall in anxiety. Doing this repeatedly allows the person to learn that nothing bad will happen following the obsession or coming into contact with the object that makes him or her anxious.

