



OCD

Watching your child suffer from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, or OCD, can be heartbreaking and anxiety-provoking. In addition to being frustrating, it can seem that there is little that helps despite attempts to make it better, and often these efforts can appear to make things worse! Supportive, loving parents frequently find themselves bending over backwards and going to extremes to help their child avoid anxiety-producing situations, which in turn actually makes the OCD stronger.

OCD is characterized by obsessions (persistent thoughts, ideas, or urges) and/or compulsions (repetitive behaviors or mental acts that are usually done to decrease the obsessions). These thoughts are repetitive in nature and are often inappropriate, intrusive, and unwanted (such as fear of germs/being contaminated, repeated doubts, or getting stuck because something doesn't feel "right"). The behaviors (such as checking, handwashing, or hoarding) or mental acts (such as counting) are also done over and over, usually to try to feel better. To be diagnosed as OCD, the obsessions and/or compulsions must cause significant upset, happen frequently, and interfere with daily life (for example, make it hard to concentrate at school or to go to do things with friends). Typically, OCD begins in adolescence or young adulthood but can present earlier in childhood. In many cases, the child is able to suppress the symptoms when away from home but they reoccur once returning home.

Many children with OCD also have another problem, such as AD/HD, depression, or another anxiety-based disorder (generalized anxiety, separation anxiety, social anxiety, and/or panic attacks). Sometimes OCD comes on first, and when it isn't treated effectively, children can become depressed. Other times, children may struggle with depression before OCD appears. Either way treating both is critical and often as one improves, the other will do so as well (as kids learn how to control their OCD they often feel happier and a greater sense of control).

It is a good idea to get help if you suspect your child is having symptoms of OCD. The sooner it is treated, the easier it is to get OCD under control.

Recommended treatment:

- Behavioral interventions (exposure therapies)

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (including relaxation and stress management strategies as well as challenging obsessive thoughts/worries, tolerating uncertainty, and facing fears)
- Medication management