

OCD in Children and Teens



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Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a mental health condition where a person has obsessive thoughts and compulsive activity.

An **obsession** is an unwanted and unpleasant thought, image or urge that repeatedly enters a person's mind, causing feelings of anxiety, disgust or unease.

A **compulsion** is a repetitive behaviour or mental act that someone feels they need to carry out to try to temporarily relieve the unpleasant feelings brought on by the obsessive thought.

An Explanation

Obsessive compulsive disorder can occur in people of all ages, and often starts in childhood. It is a problem that tends to come and go over time. Often it starts gradually but sometimes it starts suddenly or quickly becomes severe.

It's estimated around 12 in every 1,000 people in the UK are affected by the condition. This equates to almost 750,000 people. (NHS)

Identifying OCD

People with OCD are often embarrassed about it, and may not reveal their symptoms much at first. If symptoms become less controllable, OCD may present itself in your child in many different ways.

Here are some common signs to look out for that might give you an indication that they may be suffering from OCD, such as:

- a desire to have their room tidied in a particular way, with everything perfectly aligned
- repetitive hand-washing or prolonged, repeated showering /bathing
- worrying excessively about their handwriting and neatness of their schoolwork
- worrying about harm coming to loved ones, such as parents, siblings, friends or pets
- going to extreme lengths to protect the family home by repeatedly checking locks and taps
- feeling the need to count whilst they perform certain tasks, sometimes in multiples of a particular number
- refusing to let go of or discard seemingly useless or old items
- worrying excessively about becoming ill or catching specific diseases (OCDUK)

How does OCD affect them?

The young person who suffers from OCD will experience intrusive thoughts, images or impulses (obsessions), which make them feel like they have to carry out certain behaviours to reduce anxiety. It is possible that they will not be able to explain to other people about their obsessions, particularly at a young age. Managing these thoughts and suppressing the

behaviours can be distracting, exhausting and embarrassing. They may be very keen to keep their anxiety a secret, as they understand that OCD is irrational.

If I think my child has OCD?

If you think your child may have OCD then the first thing to do is to speak with their GP (if they are a young child). With older children / teenagers, they might wish to speak with their GP alone, but you should encourage them to seek help. Whilst awareness of OCD is gradually increasing, there are unfortunately still some GPs who have a very limited knowledge of the illness. (OCDUK)

The GP can then arrange a referral to your local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Here you and/or your child will be able to discuss their symptoms with a health professional in your area, who knows how to diagnose and treat OCD.

Early intervention is vital; there is considerable proof that the sooner OCD is identified and treated, the more chance there is of a better recovery. (OCDUK)

How OCD is treated

With treatment, the outlook for OCD is good. Many people will eventually be cured of their OCD, or their symptoms will at least be reduced enough that they can enjoy a good quality of life.

The main treatments for OCD are:

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)** – involving a therapy known as graded exposure with response prevention (ERP), which encourages you to face your fear and let the obsessive thoughts occur without "neutralising" them with compulsion.
- **Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)** – this medication can help reduce your symptoms by altering the balance of chemicals in your brain. (NHS)

NHS Choices

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) was launched in 2007 and is the official website of the National Health Service in England

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Obsessive-compulsive-disorder/Pages/Symptoms.aspx>

This site gives an overview of OCD as a condition, it gives information on treatments available such as CBT or SSRI'S. There are real stories from people living with OCD as well as a forum for adults to Discuss OCD. There is a further section with information on various clinical trials.

Royal College of Psychiatrists

21 Prescot Street, London, E1 8BB - 020 7235 2351 - 020 7977 6655

General enquiries: reception@rcpsych.ac.uk

This is one in a series of factsheets for parents, teachers and young people entitled Mental Health and Growing Up. This factsheet looks at some of the reasons why obsessions become compulsions and offers advice.

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/parentsandyoungpeople/youngpeople/ocd.aspx>

Parents' Guide OCD UK

The leading national charity, independently working with and for young people affected by Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

<http://www.ocduk.org/sites/default/publications/Flip-ParentsGuide/>

This site gives you information on how to identify OCD, how to seek a professional diagnosis, how to treat OCD in both children and adults. Where to go for support including advocacy and an on-line community

Anxiety Care UK

8 Nicholas Court, 3 Wallwood Road, London, E11 1DQ

Telephone number: 07552 877219

Email admin@anxietycare.org.uk

For emotional support please contact: recoveryinfo@anxietycare.org.uk

<http://www.anxietycare.org.uk/docs/ocdchild.asp>

<http://www.anxietycare.org.uk/docs/ocdcarers.asp>

This site has a comprehensive description of the symptoms of OCD as well as some of the science and research behind OCD and some of what are considered OCD spectrum disorders

Children and Teenagers

OCD UK

A guide to OCD for Children – OCDUK.ORG

Come and meet Jolly and Grump

Everybody worries about things in their life: friends, family, school etc. But for some people, these worries become so big that they upset them and make them do things they don't want to do....

<http://www.ocduk.org/sites/default/publications/Flip-ChildrensGuide/>

Our young people's booklet and is aimed at older children, through to people in their late teens and is created to try and explain in basic terms what Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, and includes case studies by Jo, Joe and Sarah. It is printed in small DL Size, with a view to allowing young people to be discreet and slip the booklet into trouser pockets easily

<http://www.ocduk.org/sites/default/publications/Flip-YoungPeoplesGuide/>

Young Minds – The voice for young people's mental health and well-being.

YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. Driven by their experiences we campaign, research and influence policy and practice.

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people/whats_worrying_you/obsessions_compulsions/what_is OCD

These pages give you advice on identifying if you may have OCD. There are also pages on the different types of help available to children and young people

Suite 11, Baden Place, Crosby Row, London, SE1 1YW

Telephone numbers: 020 7089 5050

<mailto:yemenquiries@youngminds.org.uk>

Parents Helpline Call: 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday 9.30am – 4pm, free for mobiles and landlines).

OCD Action

OCD Youth aims to increase awareness and access to support for anyone under 25 affected by OCD.

Suite 506-507 Davina House, 137-149 Goswell Road, London, EC1V 7ET

Helpline: 0845 390 6232 / 020 7253 2664

Telephone number 020 7253 5272

Email: office@ocdaction.org.uk

<http://ocdyouth.org/support-info/>

OCD Youth is run *by* young people with OCD, *for* young people with OCD. We organise trips and outings, run online meet-ups, take part in campaigning activities, manage a youth

website and social media channels, write articles and awareness resources, produce videos and media, and much more.

No Panic

We are pleased to announce that this helpline is now open to the public. This helpline is for those aged between 13 and 20 years old and can help with anxiety, panic, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder and the specific anxieties that young people of this age can experience.

You don't need to worry if another person is going to be told about your problems, this is a confidential service. Our volunteers that work on this youth helpline are DBS checked as well so you don't need to be worried.

The helpline is open between 4pm and 6pm Monday to Friday and you can phone it on 01753 840393.

No Panic has started Youth memberships and Youth Mentoring in addition to our youth helpline. Youth Memberships are free for a limited time and Youth one to one mentoring is discounted to £5 per course. This is all for those aged between 13 and 20 years old.

Youth Helpline: 01753 840393 (For 13 to 20 year olds, open 4pm to 6pm Monday to Friday)

<http://www.nopanic.org.uk/obsessivecompulsive-disorder-and-its-treatment-by-professor-kevin-gournay/>

Useful leaflets & Resources

OCD-UK

<http://www.ocduk.org/sites/default/files/ocd-introduction.pdf>

Books

The Secret Problem: Chris Wever - *Shrink-Rap Press Australia PLC*

A book with clear and simple text and drawings that bring the symptoms of OCD and solutions to life.

What to Do When Your Brain Gets Stuck: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming OCD - by Dawn Huebner, Bonnie Matthews

Describes what obsessive-compulsive disorder is and how it works, and teaches young readers techniques to reduce and overcome it through writing and drawing activities and self-help exercises and strategies.

The Adventures of Stretch More: Pick-Your-Path Stories for Solving Problems Together. Trina Epstein & Ross Greene

Meet Stretch More, a rubber-band character who loves video games and skateboarding, but also has behavior issues that frequently get him in trouble. Stretch is very inflexible!

If you know a childlike Stretch — one who has difficulty adapting to changes, handling frustrations, and problem solving — then The Adventures of Stretch More can help! The book includes three pick-your-path stories and at key points in each story, you get to pick what happens next, as Stretch learns to solve problems together with his parents and teacher

DIY Self-diagnosis

Anxiety UK

https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/get-help-now/anxiety-information/anxiety-disorders/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/?gclid=CK_xvr2Q7coCFZKZGwod0pYO-Q

Self Help Tools

MoodGym.

<https://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome>