

# Think you know about mental illness?



## Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

The Mississippi Department of Mental Health is working to change the way you think about mental illness. Our goal is to eliminate misconceptions about and to promote a better understanding of mental health. It's time for us to change the way we think about mental illness. It's time to think again.

### What is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder?

Sometimes people may feel the need to repeat a behavior over and over again. They may feel the need to double check things, or have strange and uncontrollable thoughts. These are symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), a chronic disorder in which people have uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts and behaviors they feel the urge to repeat over and over again. These routines, known as rituals, may bring some relief from anxiety, but it's only temporary. Unwanted thoughts are obsessions, and the rituals to get rid of them are compulsions. These thoughts and rituals can get in the way of daily life.

### What are the signs & symptoms?

People with OCD may have obsessions, compulsions, or both. Some people with OCD also have a tic disorder. Motor tics are sudden, brief, repetitive movements, such as eye blinking or shoulder shrugging. A vocal tic could include constant throat-clearing or sniffing.

Obsessions may include a fear of germs or contamination, the fear of losing or misplacing

an item, or a need to have items placed in a symmetrical or otherwise perfect order. It could even include unwanted thoughts about things that could be considered taboo.

Compulsions could be something like constant hand washing, hoarding things that aren't needed, constantly counting items, or repeatedly checking on things, such as the door lock or household appliances.

OCD may have a genetic component and can run in families. It usually begins in adolescence or young adulthood, and tends to appear at a younger age in boys than in girls. People who have suffered physical or sexual trauma are at an increased risk for OCD.

### What type of treatment is available?

Effective treatments are available. OCD is generally treated with cognitive behavior therapy, medication, or both. People with OCD and other anxiety disorders lead productive, fulfilling lives. For more information, contact the Mississippi Department of Mental Health help line at 1-877-210-8513.



*All information obtained from the National Institute of Mental Health at [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov).*

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