

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



The Mississippi Department of Mental Health is working to change the way you think about mental health. One of the most difficult challenges the field of mental health faces in Mississippi is stigma. Our goal is to eliminate misconceptions and promote a better understanding of mental health and illnesses. The following information is a way to help you "Think Again" about Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and understand the related issues.

What is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder?

Obsessive-compulsive disorder, or OCD, involves anxious thoughts or rituals you feel you can't control. If you have OCD, you may be plagued by persistent, unwelcome thoughts or images, or by the urgent need to engage in certain rituals. OCD afflicts about 3.3 million adult Americans. It strikes men and women in approximately equal numbers and usually first appears in childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood. One-third of adults with OCD report having experienced their first symptoms as children. The course of the disease is variable—symptoms may come and go, they may ease over time, or they can grow progressively worse. Research evidence suggests that OCD might run in families.

What are the signs & symptoms?

You may be obsessed with germs or dirt, so you wash your hands over and over. You may be filled with doubt and feel the need to check things repeatedly. You may have frequent thoughts of violence, and fear that you will harm people close to you. You may spend long periods touching things or counting; you may be pre-occupied by order or symmetry; you may have persistent thoughts of performing sexual acts that are repugnant to you; or you may be troubled by thoughts that are against your religious beliefs.

The disturbing thoughts or images are called obsessions, and the rituals that are performed to try to prevent or get rid of them are called compulsions. There is no pleasure in carrying out the rituals you are drawn to, only temporary relief from the anxiety that grows when you don't perform them.

What type of treatment is available?

Effective treatments for obsessive-compulsive disorder are available, and research is yielding new, improved therapies that can help most people with OCD and other anxiety disorders lead productive, fulfilling lives. OCD generally responds well to treatment with medications or carefully targeted psychotherapy. For more information, please contact the Mississippi Department of Mental Health at (601) 359-1288 or your local community mental health center.