

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder characterized by uncontrollable, unwanted thoughts and repetitive, ritualized behaviors you feel compelled to perform. If you have OCD, you probably recognize that your obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors are irrational – but even so, you feel unable to resist them and break free.

Like a needle getting stuck on an old record, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) causes the brain to get stuck on a particular thought or urge. For example, you may check the stove twenty times to make sure it's really turned off, wash your hands until they're scrubbed raw, or drive around for hours to make sure that the bump you heard while driving wasn't a person you ran over.

Obsessions are involuntary, seemingly uncontrollable thoughts, images, or impulses that occur over and over again in your mind. You don't want to have these ideas but you can't stop them. Unfortunately, these obsessive thoughts are often disturbing and distracting.

Compulsions are behaviors or rituals that you feel driven to act out again and again. Usually, compulsions are performed in an attempt to make obsessions go away. For example, if you're afraid of contamination, you might develop elaborate cleaning rituals. However, the relief never lasts. In fact, the obsessive thoughts usually come back stronger. The compulsive behaviors often end up causing anxiety themselves as they become more demanding and time-consuming.

Most people with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) fall into one of the following categories:

- Washers are afraid of contamination. They usually have cleaning or hand-washing compulsions.
- Checkers repeatedly check things (oven turned off, door locked, etc.) that they associate with harm or danger.
- Doubters and sinners are afraid that if everything isn't perfect or done just right something terrible will happen or they will be punished.
- Counters and arrangers are obsessed with order and symmetry. They may have superstitions about certain numbers, colors, or arrangements.
- Hoarders fear that something bad will happen if they throw anything away. They compulsively hoard things that they don't need or use.

[http://www.helpguide.org/mental/obsessive\\_compulsive\\_disorder OCD.htm #online](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/obsessive_compulsive_disorder OCD.htm #online)