

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder in Children & Teens

What is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)?

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) causes a person to have uncontrollable and unwanted thoughts, feelings or fears. They try to get relief from these feelings or anxieties through compulsive, recurring behaviors. For example, counting tiles on the floor, believing a certain item must be with them for good luck, brushing their teeth over and over when one time would have been enough. With compulsion, a child will repeat an act or do something until it feels “just right” to them. If they do not get that “just right” feeling they will feel anxious or like a task was left unfinished.

The thoughts and behaviors associated with OCD typically take up a lot of time in a person's day, interfere with their activities and relationships, and impact their overall quality of life. The child may even realize that their fears, obsessions, or compulsion do not make sense, but they can't stop the anxiety that they are feeling.

Research still has not been able to identify exactly what causes OCD.



Signs & Symptoms

A child with OCD may experience either obsessions or compulsive behaviors or a combination of both.

Obsessions:

- Fear of germs, not wanting to touch anything dirty
- Worrying that they or someone else will get sick, hurt or die
- Needing items to be placed in a perfectly straight line or other symmetrical way
- Believing that a certain object is either good or back luck, being panicked if they don't have their lucky item or are near an unlucky item
- Being particular about numbers (i.e., becoming anxious when the TV volume is set to an odd number)

Compulsions (also called “rituals”):

- Excessively washing or cleaning things
- Frequently re-writing, re-reading or re-doing something
- Repeating words or phrases until they sound “just right”
- Constantly re-checking that doors are locked, homework is done, lights are off, etc.
- Touching or tapping items a certain number of times or until the touch feels a certain way
- Collecting or hoarding objects



Our Locations

KANSAS CITY
4300 Brenner Dr.
Kansas City, KS 66104

WICHITA
1507 W. 21st St. N.
Wichita, KS 67203

HAYS
205 E 7th St.
Hays, KS 67601

What You Can Do to Help

- **Seek professional help.** It's important to have a physician or licensed mental health professional examine the child for an accurate assessment and diagnosis of their physical and mental health.
- **Guardians can participate in therapy with the child** to learn and practice recommendations from the therapist. Attending each appointment also shows the child your support and dedication to their wellness.
- **Kids may feel embarrassed or confused about their OCD symptoms and this may cause them to keep it to themselves.** Encourage them to talk about their feelings and stay positive. Do not blame or shame them.
- **Since kids often don't talk about OCD experiences, it's important to be very observant of their behavior** to watch for warning signs.
- **Work closely with the child's teachers** and school guidance counselors to ensure everyone knows how to best support the child.



Contact KVC Hospitals for Support

KVC Hospitals is a network of nonprofit children's psychiatric hospitals and residential treatment centers serving youth ages 6 to 18. Each year, we give thousands of youth a safe place to heal, build resilience, and overcome struggles with behavioral and mental health challenges. Our compassionate team of psychiatric, medical and behavioral health professionals provides a nurturing and therapeutic experience along with a treatment plan tailored to meet each child's individual needs. The goal of our treatment programs is for each child to safely return home with the resources and supports in place to live a healthy and happy life in their community.

If you're concerned that a child in your care is struggling with OCD or other mental health needs, **call KVC Hospitals at 913-890-7468.**

We're available 24/7 to answer your questions.

Here's a list of additional resources you can contact for help:

- Schedule an appointment with the child's primary care physician or local community mental health center for an assessment
- Visit www.iocdf.org for free resources from the International OCD Foundation
- Text HOME to 741741 for 24/7 support from the Crisis Text Line
- Call the National Alliance on Mental Illness helpline at 800-950-6264, which is staffed by volunteers who have mental health conditions
- Learn more from the Child Mind Institute by visiting www.childmind.org/guide/parents-guide-to-ocd