



Cumbria, Northumberland,  
Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Obsessions and Compulsions

Easy read information





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**A member of staff or a carer can support you to read this booklet. They will be able to answer any questions that you have.**

### **About this leaflet**

This leaflet explains about obsessions and compulsions, sometimes called Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, or OCD.

## What is OCD?



People who have OCD have obsessions – these are thoughts or feelings which might not be nice and which make them feel nervous, uncomfortable or frightened.

These thoughts and feelings make the person do something to make themselves feel better. This is called a compulsion.

You might think you are dirty or that bad things will happen if you touch dirty things, so you might have lots of baths/showers or wash your hands.

Most people who have OCD know that their obsessions and compulsions are ‘over the top’ but they can’t control them.

Some people can live their lives happily with OCD and only need help when the obsessions and compulsions upset their lives.

## What do we know about OCD?

OCD can affect us in lots of different ways. Everyone is different.



It can affect the way we think, how we feel and what we do.

Some of the signs of OCD are:

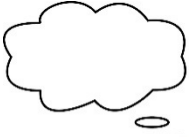
- Thoughts that frighten you, like thinking you are dirty or that bad things will happen if you touch dirty things.
- Thoughts that something you have done will hurt people – like thinking you have left the cooker on and it will cause a fire.
- Pictures in your head of hurting other people.
- Thinking that things in your life are not in order – like your ornaments not being straight or your clothes folded properly.

These are all obsessions.

To help with obsessions, people with OCD often do certain things called compulsions.



- Washing themselves lots of times.
- Not touching things that might be dirty or have germs on them.
- Not leaving the house, or not being the last person to leave the house.
- Thinking other thoughts to get rid of the obsessive thoughts.
- Moving things round lots of times until they are 'just right'.



People who have OCD often feel uncomfortable or bad that they have such nasty thoughts.

They feel better once they 'put things right' with their compulsions.

This can make it very hard to stop the thoughts coming back and getting stronger.

## Can OCD be treated?



Yes. Your doctor or nurse might give you tablets.

These might take a few weeks to work.

They might also ask you to go and see another healthcare worker who might be able to help more.



Your doctor might ask you to talk to someone about your OCD.

This helps you understand what you think and what you do.

## What can I do to help myself?

The best way to help yourself is to start making very small changes to your life. You can then work slowly towards things that really frighten you.

Your healthcare worker can get you help with this.

In this story we look at how, by making small changes, Karen managed to change her life and stop her obsessions and compulsions.



Karen was so scared of being around crowds of people that she stayed in the house all the time, never going out.



Karen was so scared that she developed an obsession with continually cleaning her house.



Karen made a plan with her healthcare worker to get over her fear of going out. It started with small changes.





To start with every morning for a month Karen and her healthcare worker walked from her house to the garden fence and back. Then Karen went to the garden fence and back by herself.

Karen did more and more short journeys until she was ready for a big step.



The next step was for Karen and her Health Care Worker to go to the shops very late at night when there were not many people around. Karen did late night shopping for two months.

The more Karen went out the less she felt she always has to clean.



After many months of short steps Karen has become much more confident and now goes shopping by herself.

Karen no longer has obsessions and compulsions.

## Where can I get more help?

These organisations can give you help and advice:



### **OCD UK**

National support group for people with OCD.

Advice Line: 01332 588 112

Email: [support@ocduk.org](mailto:support@ocduk.org)

[www.ocduk.org](http://www.ocduk.org)



### **Anxiety UK**

Information for people who have anxiety.

Telephone: 03444 775 774

Text: 07537 416 905

Email: [support@anxietyuk.org.uk](mailto:support@anxietyuk.org.uk)

[www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)



### **No Panic**

Support for people who suffer from panic attacks, OCD and phobias.

Telephone: 0300 772 9844

[www.nopanic.org.uk](http://www.nopanic.org.uk)



### **Mind Infoline**

Help, information and support.

Telephone: 0300 123 3393

Email: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)



### **Rethink**

Information for people who have mental health problems.

Advice Service: 0808 801 0525

Email: [advice@rethink.org](mailto:advice@rethink.org)

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)



You can also get help and information from your doctor or nurse.





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Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre Tel: 0191 246 7288

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