



Identifying OCD

in Children, Adolescents and Young Adults

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) often begins in childhood or adolescence, with two primary onset periods: between ages 7 and 12, and during late adolescence to early adulthood. This disorder is marked by intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors (compulsions), which can lead to significant distress and impair daily functioning. OCD in youth is often underdiagnosed or misdiagnosed because symptoms can resemble other disorders like ADHD, and patients may hide their symptoms due to embarrassment. Like other psychiatric disorders, early intervention is crucial for improving outcomes.

Key Symptoms & Signs of OCD

Obsessions (Intrusive Thoughts)

Recurrent and persistent thoughts, urges or images that are experienced as intrusive, unwanted, and that in most individuals cause marked anxiety or distress.

Compulsions (Repetitive Behaviors)

Excessive handwashing, checking, counting, arranging, or repeating phrases, often performed “just right” to reduce distress or prevent harm.

Impact on Daily Life

Interferes with schoolwork, social interactions, hobbies, and may lead to declining academic performance.

Social Withdrawal

Avoiding people, places, or activities to escape triggers, leading to a loss of interest in previously enjoyed hobbies.

Emotional Distress

Anger, frustration, anxiety when rituals are disrupted, along with increased sensitivity or irritability under pressure.

Perfectionism

Difficulty making decisions for fear of mistakes and repeatedly checking or redoing tasks.

Red Flags for OCD in Youth

- ! Persistent handwashing, cleaning, or checking rituals.
- ! Unusually high levels of anxiety over minor details or uncertainty.
- ! Frequent reassurance-seeking from family members.
- ! Excessive doubts about harm or mistakes.

Use the OCD Questionnaire on the back to assess obsessive-compulsive tendencies and identify potential areas of concern.

Questions to Ask

Help determine if an Anxiety Institute consultation would be beneficial.

Obsessive Thoughts:

- ☐ Do you ever have unwanted thoughts or worries that you can't seem to get out of your head, even when you try?
- ☐ Do these thoughts make you feel upset, scared, or stressed?

Compulsive Behaviors:

- ☐ Do you feel like you have to repeat certain actions, like washing your hands, checking something, or arranging things in a certain way, to feel "just right"?
- ☐ Do you ever feel like you have to do something over and over to prevent something bad from happening?

Time and Interference:

- ☐ Do these thoughts or actions take up a lot of your time each day (e.g., more than an hour)?
- ☐ Do they get in the way of school, spending time with friends, or doing things you enjoy?

Distress:

- ☐ Do you feel anxious, frustrated, or overwhelmed when you can't do these actions or stop these thoughts?
- ☐ Have these feelings made you avoid certain places or activities?

Triggers:

- ☐ Are there specific situations, places, or events that make these thoughts or behaviors worse?
- ☐ Do you feel the need to avoid certain situations because of your thoughts or fears?

Comprehensive Treatment at Anxiety Institute

Anxiety Institute's transdiagnostic model targets the cognitive and emotional patterns underlying OCD and anxiety, providing a tailored path to recovery. Our evidence-based approach emphasizes exposure response prevention (ERP), the gold standard for OCD treatment, to help patients confront fears, reduce compulsions, and build resilience. Additionally, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) addresses emotional regulation and improves overall functioning, creating a comprehensive foundation for long-term success.

We're here to help.

Anxiety Institute

For referrals or more information on our OCD treatment programs, please contact us:

(844) 881-1846

anxietyinstitute.com