

Parent Talk

OCTOBER 2026

OCD & Other Closely Related Conditions

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a commonly misunderstood and misrepresented condition that can have a big impact on those all across the lifespan, but particularly on kids who may not understand what they're experiencing and why. Read on below to learn the truth behind OCD and other related conditions.

What Is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)?

OCD is a mental health condition that involves two components: obsessions and compulsions. The obsessions aspect of OCD refers to intrusive, obsessive thoughts that won't go away. While obsessions can be different for each person, more common examples include violent thoughts, sexual thoughts, or general rumination over potential catastrophes. It's important to note that those with OCD do not want these thoughts and cannot control them. To calm the obsessions, those with OCD engage in compulsions, or repetitive actions and behaviors. Common examples include ritualistically tapping or touching objects, scrubbing or cleaning, and praying.

A common example of what someone with OCD experiences is that they will obsess over a particular intrusive thought and then convince themselves that if they engage in a specific behavior repeatedly, the intrusive thought won't happen. For example, if someone's OCD tells them that the world is going to end unless they tap their kitchen counter 10 times a day at exactly 8AM, they will engage in this behavior every single day. This can be incredibly distressing and time-consuming, especially for children who experience this during school.



What Is Trichotillomania/ Hair Pulling?

Some people may obsessively pull out their own hair including eyebrows or other parts of their body. This can lead to a great deal of shame, embarrassment, and physical discomfort. This is also known as trichotillomania, and while it's not considered a form of OCD, it's very closely linked. Those who pull at their hair typically do so to soothe anxious or intrusive thoughts, and typically feel better briefly after engaging in the behavior, but feel great shame and pain after and continue to feel anxious. This results in an endless cycle of anxiety, pulling at hair, relief, shame, and then back to anxiety.



What Is Excoriation/ Skin Picking?

Much like with hair pulling, some people may anxiously pick at the skin of their fingers, arms, or other parts of their body which is known as excoriation. This is also rooted in anxiety and obsessive-compulsive behavior, and may provide relief in the moment, but ultimately is both physically painful and causes great embarrassment and shame.



How Are These Conditions Treated?

All these conditions are usually treated through various types of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). For OCD, the condition is treated using Exposure with Response Prevention (ERP) therapy. This involves a qualified professional gradually introducing a patient to the things that trigger their obsessive and compulsive behavior, so that they can eventually control their reaction and find relief without engaging in compulsions. For hair pulling and skin picking, the recommended treatment is usually Habit Reversal Training, which places a lot of emphasis on identifying triggers and then providing an alternative outlet to replace the urge to pull hair or pick skin. All three of these conditions are also frequently supported through medication.



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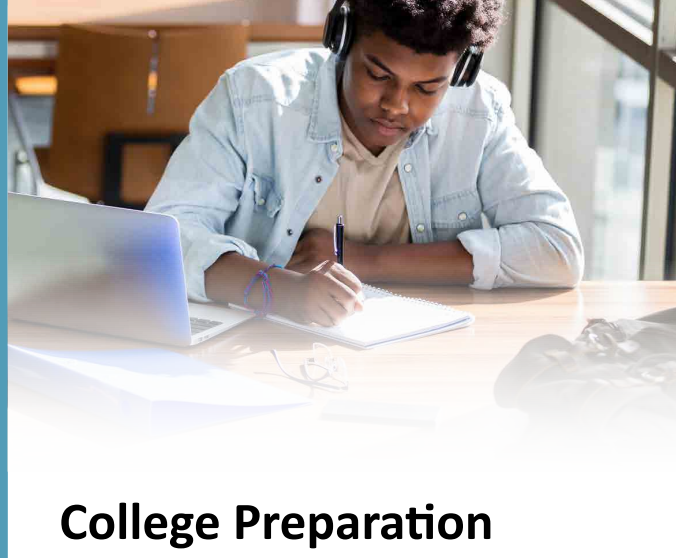
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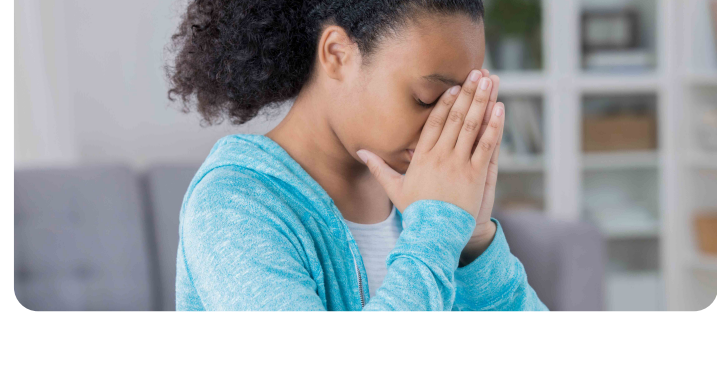
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What is OCD?

Learn all about Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder in kids and how it's treated.

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Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) Awareness, Diagnosis, and Treatments

In this seminar, we'll provide psychoeducation about OCD, diagnosis, and effective treatments.

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Defining Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: What Is It Really and What Does It Mean to Have OCD?

The label "OCD" has been co-opted by common language, but clinically, it describes a very distressing series of intrusive thoughts and compulsions that can take up a large portion of an individual's time and energy.

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Treating Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: Effective Approaches for Kids and Teens

The gold-standard behavioral treatment for OCD is called exposure and response prevention (ERP), which is a specific type of cognitive behavioral therapy. In cognitive behavioral therapy, mental health professionals can work to help individuals understand how emotions, thoughts, and behaviors all influence each other.

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