

To Learn More

Books:

Passing for Normal: A Memoir of Compulsion, by Amy Wilensky, 1999

Funny, You Don't Look Crazy: Life with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, by Constance Foster, 1995

The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Washing: The Experience and Treatment of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, by Judith L. Rapoport, 1991

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: New Help for the Family, by Herbert Gravit, 1998

The OCD Workbook: Your Guide to Breaking Free from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, by B. Hyman and C. Pedrick, 1999

Websites:

www.ocdresource.com
www.ocdonline.com

Help for OCD in the Montreal area

- ⇒ *St. Justine Hospital: 514-345-4683*
- ⇒ *Montreal General Hospital – Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Clinic: 514-485-7772*
- ⇒ *Royal Victoria Hospital Department of Psychology: 514-842-1231 Ext. 31619*
- ⇒ *Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868*
- ⇒ *Drug Help Line: 514-527-2626*
- ⇒ *Herzl Family Practice Centre – Adolescent Clinic: 514-340-8253*
- ⇒ *Head & Hands: 514-481-0277*

AMI-Quebec has many programs to help families and people suffering from mental illness. If you recognize yourself or someone you care about in this pamphlet, please contact us and we will direct you to an appropriate resource.

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OBSESSIVE- COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)



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Jamie's school started at 8 am... but he never made it on time. Jamie had certain routines he just had to do before getting to school. When he showered he needed to lather for 20 seconds, then rinse for 30 seconds and repeat this five times for each part of his body. He thought that if he failed to do this he would contaminate his family with some terrible disease. At breakfast he had terrible thoughts of throwing his bowl of cereal all over his baby brother. He certainly didn't want to do this but couldn't get the idea out of his head. Although this thought worried him each morning, he never did it for real. Late, on the way to school, he would count how many steps he took. If he lost track he would run home and start again. No matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't get to school on time. One day, a teacher who was concerned came to talk to Jamie, and when he realized that she was not going to make fun of him, he confided some of his rituals to her. With her help, he was able to find a doctor and a therapist who treated problems like this and who, with time, helped him to control his thoughts and actions.

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a form of anxiety disorder which affects approximately 3 out of 100 people. It can strike at any age, as early as childhood, and often goes undetected as those affected are either too shy or embarrassed to tell anyone. What many people don't

realize is that OCD is a brain disorder and that nobody is to blame for it. Although OCD is a complex disorder, it often responds well to treatment.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of OCD are made up of obsessions and compulsions. **Obsessions** are thoughts that occur repeatedly and **compulsions** are actions which are done over and over. Although the person is aware that the thoughts and actions are unusual and irrational, they are unable to put a stop to them. The type and severity of symptoms can vary, but when they regularly interfere with everyday activity, treatment should be sought. If treated early and appropriately, the individual can usually lead a normal life.

Common Obsessions

- Fear of germs, illness or death
- Fear of having done or doing something wrong
- Need for things to be in perfect order, symmetrical, or even
- A word or phrase 'stuck' in your mind
- Rude or frightening mental images
- Recurring violent or sexual thoughts
- Fixation on numbers or counting

Common Compulsions

- Washing continually (e.g., hand washing or showering)

- Doing work over and over to get it 'perfect'
- Checking things (locks, stove)
- Touching things
- Collecting things (hoarding)
- Counting or having a 'magic' number
- Cleaning to avoid contamination

TREATMENT

Several medications are available to help people with OCD, and they are prescribed by a psychiatrist. Different types of therapy are also used to help control the symptoms of OCD, often in combination with medication. Therapy is done with a trained specialist who works with the person to help overcome the obsessions and compulsions.