

MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS **RESEARCH SUMMARY**

TOPIC: OCD: DEALING WITH COMPULSIONS DURING PANDEMIC
REPORT: MB #4777

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD): OCD is an anxiety disorder where people have recurring, unwanted thoughts, ideas or sensations that make them feel driven to do something repetitively. The repetitive behaviors, such as hand washing, checking on things or cleaning, can significantly interfere with a person's daily activities and social interactions. Many people have focused thoughts or repeated behaviors, but these do not disrupt daily life and may add structure or make tasks easier. For people with OCD, the thoughts are persistent and unwanted routines and behaviors are rigid and not doing them causes great distress. Many people with OCD know or suspect their obsessions are not true; others may think they could be true. Even if they know their obsessions are not true, people with OCD have a hard time keeping their focus off the obsessions or stopping the compulsive actions.

(Source: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ocd/what-is-obsessive-compulsive-disorder>)

TREATMENTS FOR OCD: There are ways to manage OCD including learning good coping strategies for dealing with stress like getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising, meditation, and sticking with your treatment plan. Like stress, OCD and excessive worry often go hand in hand. This worry can focus on the theme of your obsessions, the consequences of your illness or it can relate to everyday matters such as paying bills or performing well at work. Unfortunately, worrying can often consume quite a bit of energy and make it difficult to relax. Learning techniques for coping with worry, such as analyzing the probability of what you are worried about happening and deciding how to cope with the worst-case scenario should it happen, is a valuable self-help strategy. Given that stress and worry are major triggers of OCD symptoms, one of the best ways to boost your OCD self-help skills is to learn and practice a few relaxation techniques. There is growing evidence that exercise such as running may be an important OCD self-help strategy for reducing the frequency and intensity of OCD symptoms. Practice being mindful of distressing or disturbing thoughts. It may act as a form of exposure to feared obsessions, like a person who is afraid of dogs spending time with a dog to lessen the fear. Many people with anxiety disorders such as OCD have tried alternative therapies at one time or another. Also try exploring alternative therapies. One of the most popular herbal remedies for anxiety is St. John's Wort, although the evidence is mixed as to whether it is effective.

(Source: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321341#Relaxation-and-minimizing-stress>;
<https://www.verywellmind.com/ocd-self-help-2510625>)

HOW TO DEAL WITH OCD DURING THE CORONAVIRUS: Many who are diagnosed with OCD live in fear of being contaminated by germs and for their overall health on a regular basis. This fear and anxiety can be heightened during a global pandemic like COVID-19. Here are some tips for dealing with OCD during this time. Engage in telepsychiatry/telepsychology visits, think about utilizing online resources, follow your routine and engage in appropriate self-care, find things to be optimistic about, focus on the fact that there will be a bright light at the end of the tunnel and enjoy the small things.

(Source: <https://www.bcm.edu/news/struggling-with-ocd-in-global-pandemic>)

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If this story or any other Ivanhoe story has impacted your life or prompted you or someone you know to seek or change treatments, please let us know by contacting Marjorie Bekaert Thomas at mthomas@ivanhoe.com