

But OCD is much more than normal worry. Instead, the worry is really intense and it can happen over and over again. With OCD, the brain replays the worry thoughts and if nothing is done, the worry feeling can get worse and worse.

These frequent worry thoughts are called obsessions (say: ahb-**seh**-shunz), and the behaviors people do to try to make the worry thoughts go away are called compulsions (say: kum-**pul**-shunz).

What Are Obsessions?

A kid who has OCD might have obsessions about illness or injury or dying. And these obsessive worries just don't quit. The brain keeps repeating them instead of moving on to something else. It can be a lot like that awful song you hear that gets stuck in your head. No matter how much you don't want to hear it, your brain just keeps playing it back.

Having upsetting thoughts that you can't get rid of can feel terrible and scary. And having so many worry thoughts can make it hard to concentrate on anything else. OCD can take the fun out of almost anything.

With OCD, someone may have obsessions about:

- germs or dirt
- illness or injury (involving the person or someone else)
- coming across unlucky numbers or words
- things being even or straight
- things being perfect or just right in a certain way
- making mistakes or not being sure
- doing or thinking something bad

What Are Compulsions?

Compulsions are the behaviors, or actions, that someone with OCD does to try to shut down the worry thoughts. Another name for compulsions is rituals. By doing compulsions, people with OCD hope to keep bad things they worry about from happening. They believe that doing a certain ritual will make the bad feeling go away and, for a while, it often does. They feel scared that if they don't do the ritual something bad will happen.

Of course, plenty of people who **don't** have OCD have rituals or actions that are important to them. Maybe you tap your pencil three times before starting a tough test or sing a certain song just before diving off the high dive. Perhaps you have a lucky number or even a lucky pair of socks. But OCD compulsions are much more than doing something just for luck.

Kids with OCD feel they **have** to do certain things over and over to feel protected from unlucky events. Kids with OCD don't really **want** to be doing rituals. But when you have OCD, performing the rituals seems like that's the only way to feel safe from bad things happening.

And the more kids with OCD do these rituals, the more they feel like they have to do them. Kids with OCD can end up spending so much time on rituals that they have little time left for the things they really do want to do. Here are some OCD compulsions:

- lots of hand washing or showering (doing this way more than usual or having a hard time stopping)
- counting (like having to count 25 white cars before going into school)
- touching (like touching every single fence post between home and the bus stop)