Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
What is OCD?

- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder where a person has recurrent and unwanted ideas or impulses (called obsessions) and an urge or compulsion to do something to relieve the discomfort caused by the obsession.

- The obsessive thoughts range from the idea of losing control, to themes surrounding religion or keeping things or parts of one's body clean all the time.

- Compulsions are behaviors that help reduce the anxiety surrounding the obsessions.

- In OCD, it is as though the brain gets stuck on a particular thought or urge and just can't let go.
Obsessions

► The person does not want to have these obsessive ideas, finds them disturbing and intrusive, and usually recognizes that they don't really make sense.

► Obsessions are accompanied by uncomfortable feelings, such as fear, disgust, doubt, or a sensation that things have to be done in a way that is "just so."
Compulsions

► People with OCD typically try to make their obsessions go away by performing compulsions.

► Compulsions are acts the person performs over and over again, often according to certain "rules."

► OCD compulsions do not give the person pleasure. Rather, the rituals are performed to obtain relief from the discomfort caused by the obsessions.
SYMPTOMS of OCD

- The thoughts and behaviors a person with OCD has are senseless, repetitive, distressing, and sometimes harmful, but they are also difficult to overcome.
Long-lasting Symptoms

► OCD tends to last for years, even decades

► The symptoms may become less severe from time to time, and there may be long intervals when the symptoms are mild, but for most individuals with OCD, the symptoms are chronic.
Typical OCD Symptoms

**Common Obsessions**
- Contamination fears of germs, dirt, etc.
- Imagining having harmed self or others
- Imagining losing control of aggressive urges
- Intrusive sexual thoughts or urges
- Excessive religious or moral doubt
- Forbidden thoughts
- A need to have things "just so"
- A need to tell, ask, confess

**Common Compulsions**
- Washing
- Repeating
- Checking
- Touching
- Counting
- Ordering/arranging
- Hoarding
- Praying
Many people still carry the misperception that they somehow caused themselves to have OCD.

OCD is likely the cause of a number of intertwined and complex factors (not just 1) which include genetics, biology, personality development, and how a person learns to react to the environment around them.

What scientists today do know is that it is not a sign of a character flaw or a personal weakness, OCD is a serious mental disorder.
Before the arrival of modern medications and behavior therapy, OCD was generally thought to be untreatable.

Today, luckily, treatment can help most people with OCD.

Although OCD is usually completely curable only in some individuals, most people achieve meaningful and long-term symptom relief with comprehensive treatment.
Behavior Therapy

- A specific behavior therapy approach called “Exposure and Response Prevention” is effective for many people with OCD.

- Exposure is based on the fact that anxiety usually goes down after long enough contact with something feared. Thus, people with obsessions about germs are told to stay in contact with "germy" objects (e.g., handling money) until their anxiety is extinguished. The person’s anxiety tends to decrease after repeated exposure until he no longer fears the contact.

- For exposure to be of the most help, it needs to be combined with response or ritual prevention (RP). In RP, the person’s rituals or avoidance behaviors are blocked. For example, those with excessive worries about germs must not only stay in contact with "germy things," but must also refrain from ritualized washing.

- Studies of behavior therapy for OCD have found it to be a successful treatment for the majority of patients who complete it.
For many years, mental health professionals thought of OCD as a rare disease because only a small minority of their patients had the condition.

The disorder often went unrecognized because many of those afflicted with OCD, in efforts to keep their repetitive thoughts and behaviors secret, failed to seek treatment.

OCD affects more than 2 percent of the population, meaning that OCD is more common than such severe mental illnesses as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or panic disorder.

OCD strikes people of all ethnic groups. Males and females are equally affected.
GENERAL INFO....

- OCD symptoms can occur in people of all ages
- Not all Obsessive-Compulsive behaviors represent an illness. Some rituals (e.g., bedtime songs, religious practices) are a welcome part of daily life
- Only when symptoms persist, make no sense, cause much distress, or interfere with functioning do they need clinical attention.
OCD can start at any time from preschool age to adulthood (usually by age 40).

On average, people with OCD see three to four doctors and spend over 9 years seeking treatment before they receive a correct diagnosis. Studies have also found that it takes an average of 17 years from the time OCD begins for people to obtain appropriate treatment.

OCD tends to be underdiagnosed and undertreated for a number of reasons.
Do I Have OCD?

- A person with OCD has obsessive and compulsive behaviors that are extreme enough to interfere with everyday life.

- People with OCD should not be confused with a much larger group of individuals who are sometimes called "compulsive" because they hold themselves to a high standard of performance and are perfectionist and very organized in their work and even in recreational activities.