



## What are the Signs of OCD?

Children may have obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder that can develop in kids as early as 6 to 9 years old. OCD occurs when a child frequently experiences unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and feels compelled to engage in behaviors (compulsions) because of these thoughts. These obsessions and compulsions typically take up a lot of time, more than an hour a day, and may interfere with their daily activities or cause significant distress. So, if a child's persistent thoughts and behaviors are significantly impacting their life, it could be a sign of OCD.

Here are the Signs...

**Catastrophizing.** Easily jumps to the conclusion that something terrible happened. For example, if her parents are late to pick her up, the girl might tell herself that her parents died in a car accident.

**Fear of Contamination.** Constantly worried about germs and touching certain objects or surfaces that will make them sick (e.g., afraid of using public restrooms or touching doorknobs without washing their hands excessively).

**Excessive Cleaning or Washing.** Children may repeatedly wash their hands, bathe, or clean items excessively because they fear germs or contamination.

**Repetitive Checking.** They are constantly checking things even when there's no need to do so. Namely, a child may constantly revisit their backpack to ensure they have packed everything correctly, even if they've already checked it several times.

**Obsession with Orderliness.** Feels upset when items aren't arranged perfectly or if things are out of alignment. For instance, a child may insist on organizing their shirts according to color and become upset if someone disturbs the order.

**Hoarding.** Accumulating unnecessary items and having difficulty throwing things away even when they have no practical value.

**Repeated Rituals.** Engaging in repetitive behaviors or rituals, such as touching things a certain number of times or performing actions in a specific sequence, to alleviate anxiety. Take, for instance, before going to bed, a child may need to touch each corner of their blanket a certain number of times before they can settle down.

**Constant Reassurance Seeking.** Continuously seeking reassurance from parents about their worries often leads to repetitive questioning.

**Obsessive Thoughts.** Intrusive, distressing thoughts or images that children cannot control that lead to anxiety or discomfort. Namely, a child might have recurring fears of getting stomach flu, leading them to obsess over hand-washing.

**Avoidance Behaviors.** Avoiding certain situations or places that trigger obsessive thoughts or anxiety. In particular, a child does not wear the color purple as she associates the color with an anxiety-provoking situation.

**Symmetrical Tapping and Touching.** Consider a child organizing their toys on a shelf. If they accidentally bump one toy with their right hand, they may feel compelled to then touch another toy with their left hand to "balance" it out. This behavior might seem like typical playfulness, but it could be a sign of an OCD-driven need for symmetry and order.

**Perfectionism.** Striving for perfection in tasks or activities and becoming distressed when things are not done perfectly. For instance, the child may spend an excessive amount of time erasing and rewriting letters or numbers until they look "perfect."

**Superstitious Behavior.** Experiencing intense fears or worries about unlikely events, such as fear of harming oneself or others. For example, a child may express intense fear of something bad happening to their family if they don't perform a specific ritual, such as tapping their feet three times before entering the house.

**Difficulty Concentrating:** Struggling to concentrate or focus on tasks due to preoccupation with obsessions or compulsions.

If you suspect your child has OCD and it's significantly affecting their life, early intervention is vital. Addressing these symptoms promptly can alleviate challenges. Children with OCD may be eligible for academic accommodations through an IEP or 504 plan, depending on the severity of their condition.

For assistance or questions about this process, contact [hello@loveyourschool.org](mailto:hello@loveyourschool.org). Additionally, if you have further inquiries, reach out to us. We can provide information on private evaluations to see if your child has OCD, school options, and programs like the Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Account program, which offers funds for students to support their education.

## **More Resources**

[What Does OCD Look Like in Kids? - Child Mind Institute](#)

[Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder \(OCD\) - CDC](#)

[“My Kid Has OCD – How Will This Impact Their Education?” - Specialists in Psychology Variations](#)

[Managing OCD in Your Household - International OCD Foundation](#)

[How to Help Your Child: A Parent's Guide to OCD - OCD Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago](#)

[Talking to Your Child's School - International OCD Foundation](#)

[Resources for For Parents & Families - International OCD Foundation](#)

[What Does OCD Look like in the Classroom? - Child Mind Institute](#)

[A Teacher's Guide to OCD in the Classroom - Child Mind Institute](#)