

Pointers For Parents

Detecting Obsessive Compulsive Disorder In Children

(NAPSA)—Childhood is a time for new experiences. Kids branch out and go to school, discover their interests and make new friends. But for children with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), even everyday activities can become a source of frustration and anxiety. Kids may run late in the morning, repeatedly washing their hands, lining up the buttons on their shirt or checking the door locks before leaving the house. Schoolwork may suffer because the need to perform perfectly, often ritualistically, causes them to run out of time on tests and assignments.



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Children with OCD are plagued by intense and persistent thoughts, impulses or images, called obsessions. Intrusive and inappropriate worries are usually about injury, illness, germs or the death of a loved one. The children may engage in behaviors called compulsions, or rituals, such as counting, ordering or checking to reduce their stress and ward off

impending disasters. They believe that if they do not perform the ritual, they will “cause” something bad to happen to themselves or a loved one.

Identifying the Problem

It can be difficult for parents, teachers and other adults to identify a child with OCD. Many kids suffer in silence, yet act out in ways that do not make sense. Their behavior often appears to be rigid, controlling or attention seeking. When symptoms are severe and affect daily life, parents should contact a health professional. Classic symptoms include *excessive* and *repetitive*:

- Washing or cleaning
- Checking
- Repeating numbers, phrases or prayers
- Hoarding useless items.

Parents should alert their child’s pediatrician if the symptoms occur suddenly and severely within a month of a strep infection, as this may be due to a syndrome called PANDAS (Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal infection).

Identifying the Right Treatment

OCD is treatable with cognitive behavior therapy, medication or a combination of both. Parents should discuss treatment options with their child’s health professional.

For a listing of mental health professionals who specialize in treating Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or for more information, visit the Anxiety Disorders Association of America Web site at www.adaa.org.