

## Follow-up

It is important to keep your clinic appointments so that your doctor can observe and monitor your symptoms, medications and side effects progress and adjust your treatment. Do not stop or change your medication on your own.

## For further information, please contact:

### Psychiatry Clinic

Aga Khan University Hospital  
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### Psychiatry Ward

Aga Khan University Hospital  
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## Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

### A Guide For Patients/Families



This brochure has been developed to give you information about obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), its causes, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment options. It is designed to respond to the questions most frequently asked by patients and his/her family.



آغا خان یونیورسٹی ہسپتال، کراچی

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## What is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)?

It is an illness that traps people in endless cycles of repetitive thoughts (obsessions) that cause anxiety and in an attempt to control this feeling they develop routines that result in compulsive behaviour. We all have habits and routines that help us to organise ourselves, but people with OCD develop rituals that take up too much time, (more than an hour a day) cause great distress and interfere with their daily lives.

## What Causes OCD And How Common as it?

It may be caused by an imbalance in a brain chemical called serotonin. Research suggests that in some cases genes play a role. OCD is quite a common illness though many sufferers may hide their problem to avoid embarrassment. People with OCD often have other kinds of anxiety and about 70% also have had major depression at some time in their lives. It can start at any age from pre-school and often takes many years for a correct diagnosis.

## What Are Some Common Obsessions?

- Fear of dirt, germs etc.
- Disgust with bodily waste.
- Concern with order, and a need to have things 'just so'.
- Fear of forbidden thoughts (blasphemous religious thoughts)
- Constantly thinking about certain sounds, images, words or numbers.
- Constant need for reassurance.
- Fear of harming self or others

## What are Some Common Compulsions?

- Cleaning and grooming rituals, such as excessive hand-washing
- Checking rituals involving drawers, door locks or electrical appliances
- Ordering and arranging items in certain ways
- Counting over and over to a certain number
- Saving newspapers, mail or containers when no longer needed
- Seeking reassurance and approval

## How is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Treated?

The signs and symptoms may come and go many times throughout life so it is important to recognise them early and learn how to manage OCD and prevent any complications

- Education of the patient and family about OCD and its treatment as a medical illness. How they can help in early identification of another acute period and provide support and encouragement.
- **Psychotherapy:** including behavioural management for the patient and, counselling for the family/friends.
- **Medication:** Antidepressant medications are very effective but it takes several weeks to assess which medication and dosage is right for you.

All three treatments may be prescribed for lasting effect

## Are There Any Side Effects Of The Medications?

Most people tolerate the medications very well. Make sure you know which medication you are taking and ask your doctor which side effects you may expect to have.