

Getting treatment for OCD

Therapy

The most researched and successful form of therapy for OCD and related conditions is **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with Exposure and Response Prevention** (CBT with ERP).

Cognitive parts of the therapy work on changing internal assumptions like "I am bad for having these thoughts" or "Feelings of anxiety mean there is danger", which keep the OCD going strong.

The main **behavioural** technique recommended for OCD is ERP, in which the person faces feared situations to increase resilience against anxiety and practice new reactions.

Medication

The recommended initial medication for OCD are called SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors). They are called **anti-obsessional** because they help to reduce the obsessions and compulsions the person experiences, making them easier to move away from.

The NHS Stepped Care Model

The NHS runs a system in which there are different levels of treatment that are appropriate for different levels of need. People with milder symptoms might start at the bottom and, if they don't get better there, move their way up. If someone needs more specialised care, they should be referred directly to the level that seems most appropriate. The treatments offered will be the same at each stage, but professionals will be more experienced at adapting them to complex needs.



Accessing treatment

Mental health services can be confusing and frustrating to try to navigate, especially when you're already struggling with how you feel. Sometimes information isn't clear, or a professional who doesn't understand OCD might offer the wrong medication or the wrong level of therapy.

Often, getting the right support comes down to knowing what you are entitled to and how to ask for it.

"My doctor said there wasn't any support available, but then I came back with information about what is recommended for my symptoms and treatment history. I got the referral I needed, but also knew who to raise this with in my area if that didn't work."

How OCD Action can help

We have specialist knowledge about the recommended treatments for OCD and related conditions, how the NHS works, and the NICE guidelines for OCD and BDD. You don't need to navigate this alone, and if anything doesn't sound right you can speak to us about it.

Next Steps

Support alongside therapy
ocdaction.org.uk/nextsteps

Helpline

For information and a listening ear
0300 636 5478
support@ocdaction.org.uk

Online resources

Your guide to getting what you need
ocdaction.org.uk/resources