

Compulsive Disorders in Children and Young People

What is it?

A compulsive disorder is when a person has repeated unwanted thoughts or the need to repeat a specific behaviour or mental act. It is sometimes confused with anxiety because of the distress caused by the thoughts and need to repeat the behaviour.

To be diagnosed, the repetitive thoughts and behaviours have to be severe enough that it is affecting the person's ability to function (such as physically, socially, academically, etc.)

Obsessive-compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Unwanted thoughts urges or images that keep coming back and cause you to repeat a behaviour or mental action to feel better.

Body Dysmorphic Disorder

An obsessive belief there is a defect or flaw in their physical appearance and repeating behaviours (looking in a mirror) or checking because of these beliefs.

Trichotillio-mania

Cannot stop pulling out your hair to the point it causes hair loss even though you have tried to stop or reduce this behaviour.

Excoriation

Cannot stop picking at skin which causes damage even though you have tried to stop or reduce this behaviour.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP may refer your child for treatment. Mild to moderate compulsive disorders in children can be treated effectively with early intervention and child behaviour strategies. A referral does not mean that your child is seriously mentally unwell.

Your GP may also:

- Refer your child for counselling to help them learn to deal with the obsessive thinking and compulsive behaviours.
- Refer to a specialist service if the compulsive disorder is severe or if your child might need medication

Your GP will want your child to come back so they can check how they are improving. If they are not improving, your GP may discuss other options to assist.

It is important to support your child in learning how to manage their compulsions. Treatment can often take time.

Some of the things that you can do include:

- Getting treatment early as it helps prevent the compulsive behaviours getting worse
- Try not to get frustrated when your child is distressed. It may not make sense to you but their brain is telling them that they are unsafe unless they have this thought or complete this behaviour.
- Look after yourself – you are the child's main support and it is easy to forget to maintain good self-care.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

There's a lot going through your mind, and it can be easy to forget the questions you want to ask your GP. Here's a list of questions you may wish to ask:

- What can I do to help my child now?
- What can I do to help my child over time?
- When should I make another appointment?
- How quickly can I expect results?
- What happens if my child gets worse?



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What supports are available?

Public health and other free services

The [Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service \(ICAMHS\)](#) provides specialist treatment for children and young people up to 18 years of age. **Talk to your GP about this service.**

The [Primary and Community Health Psychology Service](#) provides free psychological assessment and treatment for children up to 12 years. Contact **8788 4200** and ask to speak to the psychology intake worker.

The **SWSLHD Youth Health Service** provides free counselling to youth aged 12-21 years. Contact one of their centres and ask to speak to their intake worker:

- [The Corner Youth Health Service \(Bankstown\)](#) phone 9726 8633
- [The Fairfield Liverpool Youth Health Team \(FLYHT\)](#) phone 8717 1717
- [Traxside \(Campbelltown\)](#) phone 4625 2525

[HeadSpace](#) provides bulk-billed counselling services for young people aged 12-25. Contact one of their centres to make an appointment:

- Bankstown phone 9393 9669
- Liverpool phone 8785 3200
- Macarthur phone 4627 9089

South Western Sydney PHN Mental Health Services provide two services to improve access to mental health services for children and young people. Star4kids is for children aged 3-12 years and You In Mind is for young people over the age of 12 years. Both services include criteria to be met and a GP referral. Speak to your GP about this service and whether a referral would be beneficial.

The [Raising Healthy Minds App](#) is a free app you can tailor to your child, family and interests. It answers your questions about child wellbeing and shares practical tips for your day-to-day family life.

Private options

There are many private specialist and allied health providers that can treat child anxiety. **Speak to your GP about rebates for treatment.**

Where can I learn more?

Bullying No Way - for children and parents: bullyingnoway.gov.au

Kids Help Line: kidshelpline.com.au

Raising Children Network: raisingchildren.net.au

SWS Local Health District:

- [Mental Health Services in Bankstown](#)
- [Mental Health Services in Liverpool and Fairfield](#)
- [Mental Health Services in Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly](#)
- [Mental Health Services in the Southern Highlands](#)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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