

HEALTH'Sass

Doctors, food, exercise, crazy laws and notions, and wellness. Don't you think wellness is a stupid word--how about okayness or absence of sickness?

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Behavioral therapy may be better than drugs for OCD



Do you or anyone you know wash hands dozens of times a day, double and triple check that appliances are turned off, or otherwise focus helplessly on small things?

Repeated images of someone breaking in your residence, or being overly tidy can be other symptoms. These rituals can eat up entire days--keep people indoors--cost them jobs and relationships--take over their lives.

This is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder--and scientists are circling it, trying to see where in the brain these irksome messages are coming from and what can be done.

Many doctors prescribe medications for this condition, but doctors are now finding that "therapy" can help more.

It's called exposure and response prevention therapy--a cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)--and in a study of people with OCD, 80% of those unresponsive to antidepressants showed improvement, compared with 23% who got anti-psychotics and 15% who got the placebo.

Basically, the patient retrains the brain to unlearn the rituals.

This approach takes time and patience. The sufferer repeatedly does the thing he or she fears most--touching a germy item, for instance--and not washing after.

Of course, it does not work for everyone. But it might be worth exploring, according to Francine Rosenberg, PhD, a licensed clinical therapist at the Morris Psychological Group in Parsippany, NJ.