

Who can I contact for help?

Substance Abuse Service Helpline

 (844) 804-7500

Alcoholics Anonymous

 www.aa.org

National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence

 (800) 622-2255

Families Anonymous

 (800) 736-9805

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

 (800) 273-8255

Alcoholics Anonymous—Online Chat Meetings

 aa-intergroup.org/directory_chat.php

Co-occurring Alcohol Use Disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



What is obsessive compulsive disorder?

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a type of anxiety disorder. People with OCD have repeated, unwanted thoughts or ideas (*obsessions*) and/or feel urges to perform certain behaviors repeatedly (*compulsions*) to reduce anxiety and distress caused by obsessions or something else. Obsessions and compulsions can interfere with a person's daily life and social activities.

Common types of obsessions include the following:

- Fear of germs or contamination
- Feeling a need for organization or for objects to be arranged in a specific way
- Unwanted thoughts or images in one's head about violence, religion, or sex
- Associating colors or numbers with good or bad meanings

Compulsive behaviors include the following:

- Arranging things in a specific and orderly way
- Frequently washing hands or cleaning
- Counting without control
- Pulling hair or picking at skin
- Flipping a light switch ten times before leaving a room
- Counting to 20 before entering a room

What is a co-occurring alcohol use disorder (COD-alcohol)?

A person with an alcohol use disorder (AUD) may also have a mental illness, such as OCD. This is called **co-occurring alcohol use disorder (COD-alcohol)**.

Alcohol can influence the onset of mental health symptoms and vice versa, although the direct cause for each can be uncertain.

How might OCD and AUD be connected?

- Alcohol is a depressant drug, which means it can create feelings of calmness
- People may drink alcohol to cope with symptoms caused by OCD
- Alcohol can help someone with OCD temporarily feel better, but can cause them to feel even worse later
- Drinking to cope with symptoms caused by OCD can lead to long-term health problems

Alcohol has the potential to

- Trigger OCD symptoms and make them worse
- Make OCD treatment harder and affect medications a person may be taking to manage OCD
- Intensify OCD symptoms for people in withdrawal
- Create more anxiety as alcohol use disorder gets worse

What can I do if I have AUD and OCD?

- **Ask for help.** The sooner you get treated, the sooner you can reduce the risks associated with a co-occurring condition.
- Receiving treatment for one or both conditions is entirely up to how ready you feel. Your treatment plan will be decided with a health care professional.
- Treating OCD can have a positive impact on an alcohol use disorder and vice versa. Speaking with health care professionals can help in finding the root source of distress.
- Receiving treatment for one or both conditions means a step forward in living a healthier lifestyle. You will be on the right path to participating in daily tasks that might have been hard to do before.