

15 Signs That You Might Have Contamination OCD

Contamination OCD is a well-known subset of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder in which a person is constantly terrified of becoming contaminated by germs or disease. 25% of OCD sufferers in the U.S. have it, and it's the most common subset of OCD in the world.

Identifying subtypes of OCD can be very difficult. Symptoms manifest differently for each person. However, there tend to be common thoughts and behaviors that may indicate someone is suffering from Contamination OCD. We've identified 15 of those common symptoms below.

Please keep in mind, this list does not serve as a diagnosis. If you or a loved one are suffering, consult a licensed professional.

1

Do you worry about or fear becoming personally contaminated after coming into contact with certain objects or people? Do you worry about being contaminated by others, contaminating others, or different combinations of any of these?

2

Do you worry about or fear contamination after real contact or perceived contact (i.e. being around something, but not touching it or thinking you touched something when you didn't) with any of the following substances: viruses, bacteria, bodily waste (feces, urine, semen, vaginal secretions, mucus, sweat, saliva, blood), poisons, radiation, and/or toxic chemicals?

3

Do you fear or avoid people who may be sick or that you deem unclean?

4

Are you constantly on guard for what you touch especially when you are out of the house? For example: Noticing suspicious stains or marks, letting other people open doors for you, walking extremely carefully to avoid unwanted contact with others.

5

Do you fear becoming ill with a serious illness or do you worry about spreading a serious illness to others? For Example: Worrying that you got HIV by touching a door knob, or worrying that you may have given your partner HIV even though you have tested negative in the past.

6

Do you fear or avoid things that have essences of bad luck or do you avoid people who may seem to have some negative or dislikable traits?

7

Do you worry about being poisoned by household chemicals or do you worry about poisoning others accidentally?

8

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9

Do you have elaborate or repetitive rituals that you perform after coming into contact with a contaminated substance? For example: hand washing, showering, or constant disinfecting of one's body or possessions, always wearing gloves, frequently changing clothes, praying or saying things repeatedly to yourself after exposure to a feared substance.

10

Do you excessively throw things away or avoid things that are thought to be contaminated? For example: throwing out clothing worn on the day that you went to the hospital because it is "infected" with a bad experience.

11

Do you repeatedly question others as to whether they may be contaminated? For example: Asking your roommate repeatedly whether they washed their hands after taking the garbage out.

12

Do you use the internet to constantly research whether certain things/objects may be dangerous?

13

Do you create areas in your home which you deem “clean,” “safe,” and “off limits” and that others cannot enter or touch?

14

Do you repeatedly ask others for reassurance about whether things are safe or not?

15

Do you carry alcohol wipes and hand disinfectant and use them regularly on your hands and your personal items? For example: sanitizing cell phone after using it on the bus.



This list was compiled by Dr. Jan Weiner, a clinical psychologist based in NYC. For more information on Dr. Weiner, head to her website at www.drjanweiner.com.

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