Helping Seniors with OCD

What do the following have in common: hoarding old magazines, washing one’s hair repeatedly, lining up the spices in the cupboard in alphabetical order, and repeatedly checking a door to make sure it is locked? These kinds of behaviors may be symptoms of OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder), a condition that affects more than 2 million Americans of all ages.

Persons with OCD have persistent, upsetting thoughts (obsessions) and use rituals (compulsions) to help control the anxiety that these thoughts produce. We don’t understand why some people develop OCD. Among seniors, it may be related to dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.

The rituals that persons with OCD use can be frustrating to family and caregivers. Some seniors refer to their rituals as “habits.” They often recognize their habits but they don’t know how to reduce them when the habits create problems in day-to-day living. It’s not as simple as just deciding to stop the ritual behavior. The ritual helps relieve some anxiety that the senior is feeling. Stopping the ritual without dealing with the underlying anxiety will only make the situation worse.

You may have seen TV shows...
featuring persons whose homes were filled with hoarded items. People tried to help just by removing all the hoarded items, only to see the house fill up again before long.

What can caregivers do to help seniors with OCD? First, if the ritual behavior really does no harm, consider ignoring it. If the senior needs to have the forks and spoons arranged in the drawer in a particular order, and that brings her comfort, try to accommodate that. That order provides a sense of self-control for the senior. Many seniors experience a loss of self-control over many aspects of their lives as they age, so maintaining control over what they can is important.

What can be done when OCD becomes so serious that it interferes with a senior’s health and safety? Talk with family members about what you’ve observed and your concerns. Some may brush it off as harmless, but others may recognize the potential risks. Sometimes OCD behaviors seem to get better on their own, and sometimes they get worse. We don’t understand why. Talk with your senior’s primary care doctor about what you’ve observed. OCD is often treated with a combination of medications, including antidepressants, and therapy that explores better ways for the senior to reduce his anxieties.

**Resources**

**Insurance: Nuisance or Necessity?**

If you need a particular type of insurance, it is better to have it even if you never use it. The hard part is knowing the difference between insurance you need and insurance you are better off without. Many people purchase insurance without knowing whether they need it or not. Unless you fully understand insurance, you may be wasting money on insurance products you don’t need.

In some cases insurance is a necessity. When insurance is a necessity, getting the right amount of coverage is important. How much insurance to buy depends on your situation and needs. Spending money for a larger amount of coverage than necessary is also a nuisance.

Insurance protects you against financial losses from various types of risk. *Risk* is the uncertainty that many seniors experience a loss of self-control over many aspects of their lives as they age, so maintaining control over what they can is important.
you will incur a financial loss and uncertainty about the size of the financial loss. Insurance may not be necessary to cover all risks. In addition, insurance is available for risks you may never encounter.

Insurance is only one way of handling risks. Insurance should be considered when the chances of financial loss are low, but the dollar amount of the loss is high. For example, the likelihood of becoming ill enough to require a hospital stay for an extended period of time is low, but the size of the potential financial loss is enough to justify the cost of the policy. Health, disability, life, homeowners, automobile, and liability insurance each cover specific risks. Using the sources of risks you identify, examine the different types of insurance to determine if you should transfer any or all of your risks to an insurance company. You have to decide, based on your circumstances, if buying the insurance is a NECESSITY or if paying the premiums for the insurance would be a NUISANCE.

You can purchase insurance to protect against every imaginable risk, but it is not always wise. Purchasing insurance is a necessity when the potential financial loss you encounter is so large that it could lead to financial ruin, loss of savings and investments, or inability to accumulate wealth.

Paying premiums for insurance is a nuisance when the potential financial loss could be covered by current income or emergency savings. Remember, the risks that you face can change over time, so you should reevaluate your situation periodically.

**Nutrition**

**Eggs Are Back! The New Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

The 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans are out! The Guidelines are written by nutrition science experts. They tell us how to make better food choices, and are updated every 5 years. For a long time, the Guidelines recommended that we eat no more than 300 milligrams of cholesterol each day. Cholesterol is found in foods that come from animals, like meat, milk and dairy foods, and eggs. Scientists thought that eating more cholesterol put more cholesterol in your blood and caused heart disease. Too much cholesterol in your blood still seems to have a part...
in heart disease, but scientists no longer think that 300 milligrams per day is a magic number that we should all be trying to stay under. So, the 2015 Guidelines do not set a limit on how much cholesterol we should eat. Instead, the Guidelines focus on eating more of some healthier foods and less salt, sugar, and certain kinds of fat.

When ideas that have been around for a long time change, people may wonder if nutrition experts are really experts! What’s going on? You see, science depends on people working to find evidence about how things work. As the experts find more clues (evidence), their ability to see the big picture gets better. A murder mystery movie is a good example of how new clues can change ideas. Sometimes, the movie will make you think a certain person is guilty. As the detectives find more clues, you may learn that the signs point to another person! It is not until the final piece of the murder mystery falls into place that exactly the right person is charged with the crime!

Science is the same way. For a long time, cholesterol was thought to be an important criminal in heart disease. Because of new clues, scientists now think that saturated fat is the likely “crime leader” in heart disease and cholesterol in our food is a less important player in the “crime ring.”

The New Guidelines point out that removing the limit on cholesterol does not mean that cholesterol is not important. Instead, they suggest that if you eat plenty of whole grains, vegetables, and fruits, while choosing lower fat meats and low-fat and fat-free dairy foods, you should not have to worry about counting cholesterol. This change means that if you’ve been avoiding eggs, maybe you can fit these back into your healthy eating plan. Eggs are a low-cost source of protein, vitamin D, and B vitamins. Many egg dishes are easy to make and can be eaten at any meal. The following Eggs in the Garden recipe from the USDA Mixing Bowl will be a great way to put an egg in your day!

Please see page 5 for a great recipe!
Eggs in the Garden

*Cook time: 25 minutes*

*Makes: 4 servings*

4 large eggs
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 medium unpeeled red potatoes
1/2 tablespoon olive oil
4 cups fresh kale
1/4 cup chopped onion
1/2 red bell pepper (chopped)

**Directions**

1. Beat eggs, pepper, and salt in large bowl, set aside.
2. Microwave potatoes until slightly soft, but not completely cooked, then cube. (Alternate method without microwave: cube potatoes and boil 5 minutes until slightly soft, drain)
3. Mix chopped onion, red bell pepper, kale, and potatoes together.
4. Heat oil in a 10-inch non-stick skillet. Cook vegetables for 5-8 minutes; add to eggs and mix well.
5. Pour egg-vegetable mixture back into the same skillet. Cook over low to medium heat until eggs are almost set, about 8-10 minutes.
6. Cover and let sit until eggs are completely set, about 5 minutes. Egg dishes should be cooked to 160°F.

**References:**


**Nutrition Analysis:**

- Calories: 114
- Fat: 5 gm
- Saturated Fat: 1 gm
- Cholesterol: 82 mg
- Carbohydrates: 4 gm
- Fiber: 0 gm
- Protein: 13 gm
- Sodium: 230 mg
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