

What Are the Most Effective Treatments for OCD?

The most effective treatments for OCD are **Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)** and/or **medication**. □ More specifically, the most effective treatments are a type of CBT called **Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP)**, which has the strongest evidence supporting its use in the treatment of OCD, and/or a class of medications called serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SRIs.

Exposure and Response Prevention is typically done by a licensed mental health professional (such as a psychologist, social worker, or mental health counselor) in an outpatient setting. This means you visit your therapist's office at a set appointment time once or a few times a week.

Medications can only be prescribed by a licensed medical professional (such as your physician or a psychiatrist), who would ideally work together with your therapist to develop a treatment plan.

Taken together, ERP and medication are considered the “first-line” treatments for OCD. In other words, **START HERE!** About 70% of people will benefit from ERP and/or medication for their OCD.

What if Outpatient ERP Hasn't Worked? Are There More Intensive Options?

Yes. If you or a loved one has tried traditional outpatient therapy and would like to try a more intensive level of care, there are options. The IOCDF keeps a **Resource Directory** of intensive treatment centers, specialty outpatient clinics, and therapist who provide these various levels of services for OCD. The following lists therapy options from least intensive to most intensive:

- **Traditional Outpatient** – Patients see a therapist for individual sessions as often as recommended by their therapist generally one or two times a week for 45-50 minutes. (Most Therapists in the Resource Directory as well as “Specialty Outpatient Clinics” offer this type of treatment).
- **Intensive Outpatient** – Patients may attend groups and one individual session per day several days per week. Clinics designated as “Intensive Treatment Programs” in the Resource Directory offer this level of treatment.
- **Day Program** – Patients attend treatment during the day (typically group and individual therapy) at a mental health treatment center usually from 9am – 5pm up to five days a week. Many clinics designated as “Intensive Treatment Programs” in the Resource Directory offer this level of treatment.

- **Partial Hospitalization** – Same as the Day Program but patients attend the treatment at a mental health hospital. Several clinics designated as “Intensive Treatment Programs” in the Resource Directory offer this level of treatment.
- **Residential** – Patients are treated while living voluntarily in an unlocked mental health treatment center or hospital. Clinics designated as “Residential” in the Resource Directory offer this level of treatment.
- **Inpatient** -This is the highest level of care for a mental health condition. Treatment is provided on a locked unit in a mental health hospital on a voluntary or sometimes involuntary basis. Patients are admitted into this level of care if they are unable to care for themselves or are a danger to themselves or others. The goals of inpatient treatment are to stabilize the patient, which generally takes several days to a week, and then transition the patient to a lower level of care.