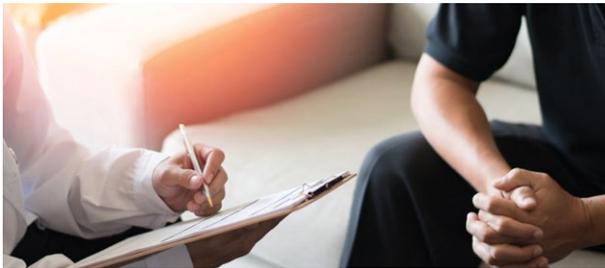


Hoarding Disorder by the Numbers

- Signs of HD can start as early as 11–12 years old. By the mid 20's, HD starts making an individual's life much harder. By their mid 30's, people start showing full signs of HD.
- 2–4% of the population have HD. This means around 1 in 25 people live with HD.
- People of all genders, all races, and all ethnicities can have HD.
- Most people with HD also live with other mental health conditions, like depression, general anxiety, and social anxiety.
- 18% of people with HD, or 1 in 6, also struggle with OCD.

How is Hoarding Disorder Diagnosed?



HD can only be diagnosed by a licensed mental health professional (or “therapist”), such as a psychologist, social worker, counselor, or psychiatrist.

To diagnose someone with HD, a mental health professional is looking for three things:

1. A person collects and keeps a lot of items, even things that appear useless or of little value to most people, and has a lot of difficulty getting rid of those items.
2. These items clutter the living spaces and keep the person from using the rooms as they were intended.
3. These items cause distress or problems in day-to-day activities, including difficulty keeping a safe environment for themselves and their loved ones.

A number of people with HD do not consider their clutter to be problematic, even when their collecting and keeping seriously interferes with their ability to function. These individuals may have limited or poor insight about their HD behavior.

Resources

To learn more about hoarding disorder, please visit:

HelpForHoarding.org

To learn more about the different types of HD, please visit:

hoarding.iocdf.org/subtypes

For information for families:

hoarding.iocdf.org/for-families

To find a local licensed mental health practitioner who specializes in treating hoarding disorder, please visit our Resource Directory. You can also find support groups and other resources in your area. To search for hoarding disorder related resources visit HelpForHoarding.org and enter your location in the green “Find Help” box.



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What is Hoarding Disorder?



What is Hoarding Disorder?

Personal items carry important meanings for all of us. Often we save things that we don't really need because they are meaningful at the time, or we can see they might be useful someday. For most of us, when these objects begin to clutter our rooms, we get rid of enough of them to reclaim our living space. However, some people have such a hard time parting with things that their living spaces become cluttered, sometimes to the point they are unusable. Individuals in this situation may suffer from hoarding disorder.

Hoarding disorder (HD) is a mental health condition in which a person has difficulty getting rid of their possessions. Attempting to get rid of possessions causes people with HD to feel a lot of distress, and the resulting clutter keeps their living spaces from being used as intended.

Just like most people, individuals with HD may want to keep their items because of memories attached to them, or because they might be useful to them in the future, or they just like the way they look. People with HD have an intensified version of these typical feelings, which can make letting go of their possessions difficult and cause them great distress.

How is Hoarding Disorder Different From Collecting, or Typical Clutter?



Collectors gather objects of a certain type that make up an interesting, and often valuable, group of related items. They keep their possessions organized and are proud to show them off. On the other hand, the possessions of those with HD are usually disorganized, not intended to be on display, and lack a theme or type.

Typical clutter is different from clutter due to HD because:

1. It is not a result of excessively acquiring things or difficulty getting rid of them.
2. It does not make living spaces unlivable.
3. It is usually found in spaces that are common for clutter (like basements, attics, or garages) where it doesn't interfere with daily activities (such as cooking, sleeping, or moving around the home).

How is Hoarding Disorder Treated?

While there is no "gold standard" treatment for HD, a variety of treatment options have proven to be helpful. Often people are helped by a combination of the types of treatment described below:

1. **Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT):** CBT helps the individual change the ways they think and behave. For those with HD, CBT focuses on decreasing the number of things they acquire, practicing sorting and discarding the things they have, and changing the way they think about their possessions to reduce saving.
2. **Motivational Interviewing (MI):** MI is a set of strategies that helps increase a person's motivation to participate in their own treatment, by allowing them to come up with their own goals and ideas of what they should do to bring about a positive change in their life.
3. **Skills Training:** People with HD often have a hard time organizing their things, making decisions about whether and where to keep them, and solving common household problems. Skills training enables them to learn new skills, practice them, and then use them to address hoarding.
4. **Buried in Treasures Workshops:** These workshops are highly structured and time-limited groups that support people in organizing, reducing acquiring, and decreasing saving of possessions. They may be run by professionals, non-professionals, and/or people who live with HD.
5. **Medication:** Licensed medical professionals (such as psychiatrists) can provide medication that change a person's brain activity to improve their mood and anxiety. This helps people with HD be more willing to participate in their treatment.
6. **Community Intervention:** Local organizations that provide housing, social services, public health, and other community services often work together to develop and implement an intervention plan for community residents with serious hoarding problems.

Hoarding Disorder and Families



HD not only affects the person with the disorder, it also affects their families. Family members who live with someone who has HD may have a hard time using everyday appliances, moving around the home, and/or inviting friends over. Family members who visit loved ones who have HD are often upset by seeing a person they love suffer from this mental health condition.

However, there are ways to support a loved one suffering from HD, and to help oneself as well.

1. **Know the early signs of HD:** Overflowing garage or storage units, not paying bills, constantly talking about the stuff, being in debt because of shopping, and/or having part of the home be off limits.
2. **Learn about HD treatment:** This brochure is a great first step! Visting HelpForHoarding.org is a great second step.
3. **Talk to them about HD:** Talk about your concerns about their safety. Avoid letting hostility and aggression build up, even if the person refuses treatment.
4. **Consider how to manage feelings:** This could be through a support group, visiting a therapist with or without the family member with HD, or developing personal coping strategies.
5. **Accept that hoarding disorder is hard to change:** Compassion for the person with HD will help, as they may have a long road to recovery ahead of them.

If you believe that a family member/friend is suffering from hoarding disorder, do not throw their possessions away or clean up their space without their consent. This will not help them change their hoarding behavior, and may cause conflict in your relationship.