

Families Impacted by Hoarding Disorder

Families impacted by HD are strongly encouraged to get support and education about HD before deciding to engage as a meaningful part of your loved one's support team.

If you believe that a family member/friend is suffering from hoarding disorder, discarding their possessions or cleaning their space without consent will not treat HD and may even exacerbate it.

- **Know early signs of HD:** Early signs include parts of the home being off limits, clutter overtaking the space in the home, and not paying bills, debt due to shopping, strong attachment to possessions.
- **Learn about HD treatment:** This brochure is a great first step! Visiting [HelpForHoarding.org](https://www.helpforhoarding.org) is a great second step.
- **Talk to them about HD:** Focus on your concerns for their safety and your own safety, along with common goals. Find a supportive outlet outside the home, like a therapist or support group, to help relieve some stress.
- **Get support for your own well-being:** Consider starting counseling to assist you with navigating your own complex feelings about your loved one's HD. Joining a support group for loved ones impacted by a family member's mental health concerns may also be helpful as many families feel alone trying to support their loved one.
- **Know that hoarding disorder is hard to change:** Be aware that recovery is often slow and marked with slip-ups. Because HD often occurs with other mental health diagnoses, it can be challenging to support a loved one without outside professional help. Be compassionate with yourself and your loved one.

Resources

To learn more about hoarding disorder: [HelpForHoarding.org](https://www.helpforhoarding.org)

To learn more about the different types of HD: [hoarding.iocdf.org/subtypes](https://www.hoarding.iocdf.org/subtypes)

To help family members with HD: [hoarding.iocdf.org/for-families](https://www.hoarding.iocdf.org/for-families)

To find a local licensed mental health practitioner who specializes in treating HD: [iocdf.org/find-help](https://www.iocdf.org/find-help)

To search for related resources and support groups in your area: Visit [HelpForHoarding.org](https://www.helpforhoarding.org) and enter your location in the green "Find Help" box.



International
OCD
Foundation

What is Hoarding Disorder?



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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 how they might be useful someday.

However, people who suffer from **hoarding disorder (HD)** have an intensified version of these feelings. HD is a mental health condition in which a person has great difficulty letting go of their possessions, causing them distress and preventing them from using their living spaces as intended.

Hoarding Disorder by the Numbers

- Signs of hoarding disorder can start as early as ages 11 to 15.
- Hoarding Disorder affects 2 to 4 percent of the population — **that's up to 13 million people in the U.S alone.**
- Most people with HD also live with other mental health conditions like depression, general anxiety, ADHD, and social anxiety.
- 20% of people with HD struggle with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).



How is Hoarding Disorder diagnosed?

HD can only be diagnosed by a licensed mental health professional, who will look for three things:

1. A person collects and is attached to a lot of items, even things that appear useless or of little value to most people, and has a lot of difficulty letting go of those items.
2. These items clutter the living spaces and prevent the person from using their rooms as intended.
3. This clutter causes distress or problems in day-to-day activities, including difficulty keeping a safe environment for themselves and their loved ones.

How is Hoarding Disorder Different From Collecting or Typical Clutter?

Both collectors and those with HD value their possessions, and many individuals with HD may describe themselves as "collectors." A key point differentiating general collecting from HD is the level of disorganization and the fact that possessions are not intended to be on display, and lack a single theme or type.



How is Hoarding Disorder treated?

There is no "gold standard" treatment for HD, but people are often helped by a combination of the following:

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT):** CBT helps individuals change how they think and behave. For those with HD, CBT focuses on decreasing acquiring, practicing sorting and discarding, and reducing saving of items.
- **Motivational interviewing:** A set of self-motivation strategies which allows individuals to devise their own plans to cultivate positive changes in their life.
- **Skills training:** People with HD often have a hard time solving common household problems, as well as organizing and making decisions about their items. Skills training enables them to learn new skills, practice them, and use them to address hoarding.
- **"Buried in treasures" workshops:** Highly structured and time-limited groups that support people in organizing, reducing acquiring, and decreasing saving of possessions.
- **Medication:** Certain medications can help improve mood and anxiety, which may enable some individuals to participate more actively in treatment for HD.
- **Community intervention:** Local organizations that provide housing, social services, public health services, and other assistance often collaborate to intervene for residents with serious hoarding problems.

