

Tips for helping yourself or someone you care about

Don't's

DON'T use negative comments to try to shame or embarrass the other person into stopping hoarding, as this tends to make the person defensive and less likely to listen to you. **DON'T** give advice or tell the person what to do.

DON'T try to do one-off clean ups or discard the person's possessions as this can be distressing and sometimes traumatic for the person.

Do's

DO something everyday to reduce the amount of clutter. You could work on a designated area at a time and use a kitchen timer to stay focussed on the task for 15 minutes.

DO install and test smoke detectors, make pathways to exit, clear items away from sources of heat.

DO ask your Council if they have a Hoarding Disorder Diversion Policy or Management Plan which may offer you extra support.

DO use weekly rubbish and recycling services to discard items, sell or give them to someone else who could use them or the Op Shops. **DO** reduce how much you acquire, shop for essential items only.

DO keep daily routines like washing the dishes or making the bed.

DO encourage the person to get help, for example you could say "you're not alone and there are people and services who can help you," **DO** praise and reinforce any progress by using encouraging language.

DO acknowledge the emotions attached to the possessions, and validate those feelings, we all have emotional attachments, it's just some people have more attachments.

Remember, people need support to understand and address the reasons behind their hoarding behavior, then a person-centered plan to reduce acquiring and increase discarding may be implemented.

Message of hope

The interventions that offer the most promise for those affected by hoarding disorder are based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with actions that target specific aspects of hoarding.

- 🏠 Understand that those with hoarding behaviours think so differently about things that "my things" become who they are; their identity is in things.
- 🏠 This brings feelings of attachment to things that are so strong it is hard for non-hoarders to understand. Friends and family are generally the key relationship values for people; for some, things and animals underpin their sense of self.
- 🏠 Hoarding behaviours are directed towards being responsible for their things, keeping control of them, and being over-attached to their stuff.
- 🏠 Take this brochure to your GP to discuss if a mental health plan may be beneficial for your circumstances.

References and other resources:

International OCD Foundation Hoarding Centre:
www.hoarding.iocdf.org

Hoarding and squalor– a practical resource for service providers (DHHS, 2013)

Responding to Hoarding and Squalor key messages (DHHS, 2013)

www2.health.vic.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care/wellbeing-and-participation/hoarding-and-squalor

www.thecrowdedhouse.net.au

www.hsr.com.au

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Do you or someone you know feel
confused or overwhelmed by clutter?
Help be part of the solution!



Information about hoarding
and how you can help



Hoarding? Collecting? Clutter?

How much is too much stuff?

Hoarding disorder is a psychological condition that leads to the persistent accumulation of, and lack of ability to discard, large numbers of objects or living animals, resulting in extreme clutter in or around premises. This behaviour can compromise the intended use of the space and threatens the health and safety of people involved, animals and neighbours.

People who hoard are of all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and can be of any gender or sexual orientation. It is an illness which, if untreated, gets worse with age. Studies show that the prevalence of hoarding disorder is estimated at approximately two to five percent of the population.



Three Basic Components of Hoarding:

1 Acquisition

Compulsive buying | Acquiring free things

2 Saving

Inability to discard anything

3 Clutter

Clutter is the end result of acquisition and saving.

How can I tell if I, or someone close to me, is experiencing hoarding?

As hoarding disorder is an illness, the person might not see they have a problem because they can't think clearly about the objects and possessions that have so much meaning for them. This may lead to avoidance of social contacts and the onset of other serious concerns like squalor, self neglect and high risk of fire.

Ask yourself questions like:

1. *Do I have problems using rooms in my house because they are cluttered with stuff?*
2. *Do I have so many things because I just can't seem to throw things out like other people do?*
3. *Do I have a problem with collecting things or buying much more than I need?*
4. *Do I feel so attached to my things that I just can't be without them?*
5. *Does my collecting and clutter disrupt relationships with family, friends, neighbours and authorities?*



Where can I get help for myself or for someone else?

The first step is to talk with your GP, health professional and local shire council. There is a growing awareness with health and community workers of how better to help people with hoarding behaviours through education, support and learning new skills.

A coordinated response is sometimes needed, as people living with hoarding and/or squalor often have many complex needs. Some of the following agencies, government departments and service providers may need to be considered for referral.

- 🏠 Specialist clinical and community mental health services
- 🏠 Psychiatrists
- 🏠 Psychologists
- 🏠 Social Workers
- 🏠 Mental Health Nurses
- 🏠 Peer Support Workers
- 🏠 General Practitioners
- 🏠 Disability Support Services
- 🏠 Youth/family services
- 🏠 Cleaning services
- 🏠 Local Council
- 🏠 Pest control
- 🏠 Skip bin providers
- 🏠 Yard maintenance
- 🏠 Animal welfare associations
- 🏠 Fire services
- 🏠 Police
- 🏠 Ambulance
- 🏠 Carer support services
- 🏠 Centrelink
- 🏠 Housing providers
- 🏠 Home and community care
- 🏠 Council recycling services
- 🏠 Waste management services.