

Hoarding disorder

A hoarding disorder is where a person gathers a huge amount of items and stores them. This is usually in a chaotic manner and results in amounts of clutter that are difficult to manage.

Hoarding can be a significant problem if:

- the amount of clutter interferes with everyday living
- it is causing distress or affecting the quality of life of the person or their family

The difference between hoarding and collecting

Many people collect items such as books or stamps. This is not considered a problem. The difference between a 'hoard' and a 'collection' is how they are kept.

A collection is usually well ordered and the items are accessible.

A hoard is usually very disorganised. It can take up a lot of room and items can be inaccessible.

Why someone might hoard

The reasons why someone begins hoarding are not fully understood.

Some reasons might be that:

- It can be a symptom of another condition.
- Someone with mobility problems may be unable to clear large amounts of clutter.
- Someone with learning disabilities may be unable to categorise or dispose of items.

Mental health problems associated with hoarding include:

- severe [depression](#)
- psychotic disorders, such as [schizophrenia](#)
- [obsessive compulsive disorder \(OCD\)](#)

In some cases, hoarding is a condition in itself and associated with self-neglect.

These people are more likely to:

- have had negative childhood experiences
- have a family history of hoarding
- have grown up in a cluttered home
- live alone
- be unmarried

Many people who hoard have strong beliefs about getting things and throwing them away. Some people might be struggling to cope with a stressful life event. This could include the death of a loved one.

Attempts to discard things often bring up very strong emotions. The hoarding person often avoids making decisions about what to throw out.

Signs of a hoarding disorder

You might have a hoarding disorder if you:

- keep or collect items that may have little or no monetary value
- find it hard to categorise or organise items
- have difficulties making decisions
- struggle to manage everyday tasks, such as cooking, cleaning and paying bills
- become attached to items, refusing to let anyone touch or borrow them
- have poor relationships with family or friends

Items you might hoard include:

- newspapers and magazines
- books
- clothes
- leaflets and letters, including junk mail
- bills and receipts
- containers, including plastic bags and cardboard boxes
- household supplies
- animals
- large amounts of data, including electronic data and emails

Why hoarding disorders are a problem

A hoarding disorder can be a sign of underlying conditions such as:

- obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- anxiety
- depression
- dementia

A hoarding disorder can be a problem for several reasons:

- It can take over your life, making it very difficult for you to get around your house.
- It can cause your work performance, personal hygiene and relationships to suffer.
- It can cause isolation and loneliness.
- The clutter can be a health risk to you and anyone who lives in or visits your home.
- It can lead to unhygienic conditions and encourage rodent or insect infestations.

What you can do if you think someone is hoarding

If you think someone you know has a hoarding disorder:

- try to persuade them to see their GP
- be sensitive about the issue
- emphasise your concerns for their health and wellbeing
- reassure them that nobody will go into their home and throw everything out

Talking with their GP will establish what treatment or support is suitable. They can refer the person to a therapist or specialist in the area.

Treatment for hoarding disorders

Hoarding disorders are difficult to treat because many people who hoard do not see it as a problem. They might not be aware of how it is affecting their life or the lives of others.

Some people who hoard realise they have a problem but are reluctant to seek help. They can feel ashamed, humiliated or guilty about it.

Cognitive behavioural therapy

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) helps you manage problems by thinking in a more balanced way. It can help you recognise unhelpful patterns of behaviour.

Learn more about [talking therapies](#)

Content supplied by the [NHS](#) and adapted for Ireland by the HSE

Page last reviewed: 1 September 2022

Next review due: 1 September 2025

Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm

Saturday: 9am to 5pm

Sunday: Closed

Bank holidays: Closed

Freephone: [1800 700 700](tel:1800700700)

From outside Ireland: [00 353 1 240 8787](tel:0035312408787)

[HSE Facebook](#)

[HSE Instagram](#)

[HSE TikTok](#)

[HSE YouTube](#)

[HSE LinkedIn](#)

[HSE X \(Twitter\)](#)

[Complaints and feedback](#)

[Emergencies](#)

[Cookie settings](#)

[Cookie statement](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy statement](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

© Health Service Executive