

Hoarding FAQ

What is hoarding?

The term hoarding refers to the excessive acquisition of and the inability and/or unwillingness to dispose of items. In addition to items, some people also hoard animals. Hoarding behaviours may result in living space becoming cramped and filled to capacity with possessions. Hoarding may impair an individual's functioning by preventing the typical uses of space and interfering with performing activities of daily living, like cooking and bathing.

What are the signs of hoarding?

Hoarding is a complex issue that varies considerably from person to person. Signs of hoarding might include:

- cluttered living spaces that may extend from the home to vehicles, garages, outdoor spaces like balconies, yards, and storage units;
- difficulty parting with items;
- belief that the items are valuable, useful or meaningful;
- losing important items in the clutter, like identification and bills;
- not inviting friends and/or family into the home;
- refusing to let people in to the home for repairs; and
- denial of a problem even when the hoarding behaviours are clearly interfering with a person's life.

What are the risks associated with hoarding?

Hoarding is recognized as a mental health issue and a public health concern. Hoarding is associated with a variety of health and safety risks including tripping, infestation, structural damage, and poor sanitation. It can also be a fire hazard causing fires and blocking escape routes. Tenants who hoard are at increased risk of being evicted and vulnerable to homelessness.

Diogenes Syndrome

Hoarding behaviours may be indicative of severe self-neglect known as Diogenes Syndrome. In addition, common characteristics of those with Diogenes Syndrome include:

- extreme personal neglect;
- extreme domestic neglect;
- social withdrawal;
- refusal of assistance; and
- lack of concern about living conditions.

Where to go for help?

If you or someone you know is exhibiting hoarding behaviours, contact the Hamilton Housing Help Centre at 905-526-8100 or at info@housinghelpcentre.ca.

Helpful Links

eMentalHealth.ca <http://www.ementalhealth.ca/Hamilton/Hoarding/index.php?m=article&ID=13330>

Moving Forward <http://www.moving-forward.ca/index.html>

Anxiety Treatment and Research Centre <http://anxiety.stjoes.ca/commun-resources.htm>

Catholic Family Services of Hamilton <http://www.cfshw.com/gatekeepers/>

Canadian Family Physician <http://www.cfp.ca/content/58/10/1087.full>

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