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Health Risks Associated with Hoarding



People who have the compulsive need to stockpile belongings are called hoarders. This condition is associated with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and depression. About one in every 300 American adults is a hoarder.

But hoarding is just a phase, right? Wrong. For true compulsive hoarders, the urge to preserve certain items in their home is emotionally and physically crippling.

Hoarding (<https://rainbowintl.com/blog/hoarding-buried-in-anxiety>) invites a number of challenges, including family problems, financial difficulties, and health hazards. Here's a look at some of the health-related risks associated with hoarding, especially if animals are involved.

Air Quality Issues

Dust, odors, and ammonia from decaying waste products can cause serious air quality issues in a hoarder's home. It may be difficult to breathe and respiratory problems may develop. It's dangerous enough to clean up such an environment without respiratory protection, but if people and animals live in these conditions, it could have a very detrimental effect on their health over time.

Mildew and Fungus

Hoarders often have difficulty throwing away food, even if it has gone bad. Spoiled food on refrigerator and pantry shelves – along with plates of half-eaten food that sit out for days, weeks, or even months – harbor mildew and fungus growth. This makes the house stink and can pose serious health risks.

Sanitation Issues

Poor sanitary conditions are most likely to occur in homes where animal hoarding (<https://rainbowintl.com/blog/animal-hoarding>) takes place. A high number of animals living together in a confined space promotes the spread of disease, especially if the owners fail to pick up after their pets. Animal waste can easily contaminate human and pet food, creating a very hazardous situation. Conditions can become so poor that some animals die, but their bodies are never removed, which exacerbates the sanitation problem even more.

Plumbing Problems

It's common for the plumbing to go bad in homes where extreme hoarding takes place. With piles of belongings stacked precariously on every surface, it's likely for items that don't belong in the toilet or down the drain to end up there regardless. Clogs, sewer backups, and other plumbing issues ensue, leading to the unsanitary conditions so prominent in extreme hoarding situations.

Pest Infestation

Cockroaches, rats, flies, and other pests are attracted to rotting food and animal waste products. A severe hoarding situation can become a haven for pests that spread diseases to the people and animals living in these unsanitary conditions.

Building Safety Issues

If it's difficult to walk around the house because of all the junk, it could be impossible for technicians to perform necessary maintenance on HVAC equipment and sprinkler systems, creating a safety hazard. Trash littering the yard makes it easier for burglars to hide from sight and attempt a break-in.

When rats live in the walls, it's possible for them to chew through wiring and cause electrical failure or fires. The sheer mass of combustible items in a hoarder's home allows any fire that starts to spread quickly. Then, the extreme clutter might block windows and doors, a fire hazard that could make it impossible to escape.

Restore Healthy Conditions to a Hoarder's Home

At Rainbow International®, [cleaning and deodorizing services \(https://rainbowintl.com/cleaning-deodorizing-services\)](https://rainbowintl.com/cleaning-deodorizing-services) are among our specialties. Whether you or someone you know is a recovering hoarder, trust our cleanup crew to remove harmful contaminants and return the home to its original condition. You concentrate on obtaining the mental and emotional recovery you need and let us focus on performing a safe and effective restoration. [Contact *Rainbow International* \(https://rainbowintl.com/contact-us\)](https://rainbowintl.com/contact-us) today to learn more or to schedule services.

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