

Facts on the Abuse of Seniors

Elder abuse is any action by someone in a relationship of trust that results in harm or distress to an older person. Commonly recognized types of elder abuse include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial as well as neglect. Often, more than one type of abuse occurs at the same time.



Learn the signs

Learn the signs and symptoms to find out if you or a senior you know might be experiencing elder abuse or neglect.

Types of abuse

Physical and sexual abuse of seniors often includes:

- hitting, pushing or shaking;
- inappropriate physical and chemical restraints;
- harm created by over or under medicating;
- unexplained visible burns, scratches, bruises, cuts or swellings; or
- vague or illogical explanations for injuries.

Psychological and emotional abuse of seniors may include:

- intimidation, humiliation and harassment;
- treating them like a child; or
- isolating them from family, friends or regular activities.

Financial abuse of seniors can include:

- misusing or stealing a senior's assets, property or money;
- cashing an elderly person's cheques without authorization;
- forging an elderly person's signature; or
- unduly pressuring seniors to make or change a will, or to sign legal documents that they do not fully understand.

Neglect of seniors can include not providing appropriate:

- water, food, shelter and clothing;
- medication or medical attention; and
- assistance with basic necessities.



Protect yourself

Protect yourself by staying informed and knowing your rights.

Why does elder abuse happen?

Elder abuse often occurs because of the abuser's power and control over an older person. Abuse can happen when the aggressor wants to intimidate, isolate, dominate or control another person.

Who abuses seniors?

Older adults affected by abuse often know and trust the person mistreating them. Elder abuse can be caused by a family member, a friend, someone who provides assistance with basic needs or services, or health care providers in institutional settings.

Why are some older adults reluctant to talk about elder abuse?

Older adults may feel ashamed or embarrassed to tell anyone they are being abused by someone they trust. They may fear retaliation or punishment, have concerns about having to move from their home or community, or feel a sense of family loyalty.



Reach Out

If you think you are experiencing elder abuse, ask for help. This may include support and assistance from family members or friends, caregivers, health care providers, social services, seniors' centres, police, legal professionals and/or members of faith communities.

For more information and a list of resources in your province or territory, call 1-800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232) or visit seniors.gc.ca.