Elder Abuse
What You Need to Know

Elder abuse can happen when an older person is vulnerable. Everyone deserves to be safe – know what to look for and what to do about elder abuse.

Who might abuse an elder?
✓ Older adults can become victims of abuse by someone close to them, by a paid or unpaid caregiver, or by a family member or friend.
✓ Sometimes the abuser is a complete stranger.

Who is at risk of elder abuse?
✓ Abuse can happen to anyone.
✓ Older adults who are dependent on others for basic care are at a greater risk of being abused.

Abuse can take many forms.
An older adult may face:
✓ Physical, sexual or verbal abuse
✓ Neglect
✓ Financial abuse
✓ Self-neglect

Signs of elder abuse include:
■ Unexplained cuts, bruises, burns or other injuries.
■ Changes in the person's behavior or emotional well-being.
■ Refusal of caregiver to allow private conversations with the person.
■ Changes in the person's finances due to missing checks, unexplained withdrawals, credit card charges or property transfers.
■ Extreme weight loss, bed sores or poor hygiene.
■ Complaints of poor or improper treatment.

Self-neglect can also be a problem.
✓ Sometimes an older person neglects his or her own well-being or safety.
✓ He or she may live alone and eat poorly, or live in unsafe or unclean conditions.
✓ The person may not seek the medical care he or she needs, or may not know where to get help.

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Watch for financial scams.
✓ Scammers may try to get credit card, Social Security or bank account numbers.
✓ They may promise money, rewards, free trips, home repairs or other services.
✓ They may send fake bills or charity requests. They may use mail, phone calls, email, door-to-door sales or TV ads.
✓ A person can be scammed by someone he or she knows, or by a stranger. Everyone should be careful about giving out personal information.

If you suspect abuse...
✓ Don’t confront the suspected abuser yourself. It may not help and it could make the older person more vulnerable.
✓ Do contact Adult Protective Services or other local social services agency. Or speak with a professional such as a doctor, nurse, police officer or social worker.

If you are a victim of abuse...
✓ Talk to someone you trust such as your doctor, religious leader or close friend.
✓ Physicians have a legal obligation to report abuse and to help an elder find safety.
✓ If you are in immediate danger, call 911 or your local emergency number.

Anyone can be the victim of abuse. Everyone deserves to be safe.

Are you a caregiver under stress?
✓ Caregivers who are tired or burned out risk becoming abusers.
✓ If you feel overwhelmed, please get help.
✓ Every state has agencies to assist caregivers with:
  ■ Respite care
  ■ Caregiver education
  ■ Elder abuse prevention

To find information about support groups and services in your area, consult your local phone book or search online. You can also call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116, or visit its website at www.eldercare.gov on the Internet.