

ELDER ABUSE



SAFETY

Protect our loved ones by knowing the signs and what to do if you see them.

Around 1 in 10 senior Americans experience some form of elder abuse. Some estimates show as many as 5 million seniors are abused each year. One study estimates that only 1 in 14 of these are reported to authorities. Often a senior's desire to stay in their home eclipses their need to report abuse that might be happening.

Common Types of Elder Abuse

There are five primary categories of abuse:

Physical – Non-accidental use of force that results in pain, injury, or impairment, including the use of drugs, restraints or confinement

Emotional – Treatment of an older adult in a way that causes emotional or psychological distress, including yelling, threats, ridicule, isolation, or blame

Sexual – Contact of a sexual nature with an elderly person without their consent

Neglect – Failing to fulfill basic needs such as food, water, health, cleanliness, pharmaceutical regularity, and emotional care

Financial – Unauthorized use of a senior's funds or property



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Self-Inflicted Abuse

Elder abuse can be self-inflicted as well. Our loved ones may feel like they can still be independent without realizing they are not maintaining a good quality of life.

Some things that you can do to help ensure they are practicing good self-care are:



Check in often and enlist the help of friends and neighbors to do the same. Are they gaining or losing too much weight? Does their home continue to have a healthy level of upkeep? Are any medications clearly marked and appear to be being taken regularly?



Make sure that contact information for doctors is easily accessible in their home.



Research senior centers that might offer daytime activities, as well as pick up and drop off services.



As a later resort, consider looking into legal guardianship so that, if they truly are unable to care for themselves, you have the legal recourse to step in on their behalf.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day – June 15

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is an opportunity for people and organizations to take action by raising awareness about elder abuse, why it occurs, and providing guidelines for how to help stop it.



Source: [American Society on Aging](#), [USC Center on Elder Mistreatment](#)

Preventing Elder Abuse & Neglect

If you're a caregiver and feel you are in danger of hurt or neglect, help is available. Maybe you're having trouble controlling your anger? Have others raised concern with your behavior? Perhaps you feel disconnected or overwhelmed? Recognizing that you have a problem is the biggest step to getting help and preventing abuse.

Here are some examples to help you prevent elder abuse or neglect:

- Request help from friends, relatives, or local respite care agencies or find an adult daycare program – everyone needs a break.
- Take care of yourself with proper rest, diet, regular exercise, and medical needs.
- Seek help for depression.
- Find a support group for caregivers of the elderly.
- Get help for any substance abuse issues.
- Get professional help such as a therapist.

Source: [HelpGuide](#)



If You Suspect Abuse

If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911 or the local police for immediate help. If you suspect abuse or neglect of someone living in the community, contact your local [Adult Protective Services](#) or [Long-Term Care Ombudsman](#).



Source: [National Center on Elder Abuse](#)

The Warning Signs

Abusers will rarely abuse your loved one in your presence. Often it can happen in the heat of a moment when there isn't anyone else around.



However, there are signs that can indicate that abuse might be happening.

- Unexplained bruises, welts, or scars, especially if they appear symmetrically on both sides of the body
- Broken bones, sprains, or dislocations
- Drug overdose or, conversely, signs of medication not being taken
- Dramatic weight loss for no apparent reason
- Broken eyeglasses or other personal assistance devices
- Caregiver's refusal to let you see your loved one alone
- A home that is in greater disarray than prior to the caretaker's presence
- Cowering or hiding behavior by your loved one in the presence of their caretaker
- Sudden onset behavior that mimics dementia such as rocking, sucking, or mumbling

Anything that seemingly comes on suddenly and without apparent cause should be investigated.

Source: [National Institute on Aging](#), [HelpGuide](#)