



What are some websites on elder abuse?

Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
www.cnpea.ca

National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly
www.nicenet.ca

Elder Abuse Ontario
www.elderabuseontario.com

Government of Canada–Elder Abuse Awareness
www.seniors.gc.ca

Nova Scotia Department of Seniors Elder Abuse Strategy
www.novascotia.ca/seniors/elder_abuse.strategy

Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia–It's In Your Hands
www.legalinfo.org/seniors

For further information

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www.acer-cart.org

Cette brochure est aussi disponible en Français.



Association Canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants retraités

Canadian Association of Retired Teachers

Elder Abuse



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What is elder abuse?

Elder abuse is any action by someone in a relationship of trust that results in harm or distress to an older person. Neglect is a lack of action by that person in a relationship of trust with the same result. Commonly recognized types of elder abuse include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or mental, financial, violation of rights and freedoms, or neglect. Abuse can be a single incident or a repeated pattern of behaviour. Often, more than one type of abuse occurs at the same time.

Why does elder abuse happen?

Elder abuse often occurs because of the abuser's power and control over an older person. In some situations, the abuse may also result from addiction issues (drugs, alcohol or gambling), mental health problems, a cycle of family violence, or ageism. Abuse can happen when the aggressor wants to intimidate, isolate, dominate or control other persons.

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 (a caregiver), or health care providers in institutional settings. In many situations of elder abuse, the abuser is dependent on the older adult for money, food or shelter.

What are indicators of elder abuse and neglect?

Elder abuse and neglect can be very difficult to detect. The following signs and symptoms may indicate that an older adult is being victimized or neglected:

- fear, anxiety, depression or passiveness in relation to a family member, friend or caregiver
- unexplained physical injuries
- dehydration, poor nutrition or poor hygiene
- improper use of medication
- confusion about new legal documents, such as a new will or mortgage
- sudden drop in cash flow or financial holdings
- reluctance to speak about the situation

What types of abuse are prevalent?

Physical

- punching, kicking, slapping, striking, hitting, pushing, shaking, shoving
- burning or scalding with hot water
- inappropriate physical and chemical restraints
- providing too much or too little medication

Sexual

- any form of sexual activity with a person without the consent of that person such as intercourse, touching, fondling, kissing
- verbal or suggestive sexual comments
- not respecting a person's personal privacy

Emotional, Psychological or Mental

- treating an adult like a child by making hurtful or taunting remarks
- continually criticizing, insulting, belittling, frightening, humiliating
- locking a person in a room
- not allowing a person to have visitors
- threatening to put a person in an institution

Neglect

- not providing a person's necessities of life such as adequate food, medication, necessary supervision of medical attention, safe shelter, assistance, personal care, clothing
- "self-neglect" where a person cannot or will not adequately care for himself or herself

Financial

- tricking, threatening or persuading older adults out of their money, property, possessions
- unduly pressuring seniors to make or change a will, power of attorney or sign legal documents that they do not fully understand
- stealing cash, cheques, savings
- threatening not to allow visitors or allow others (such as grandchildren) to visit unless money or gifts are provided
- sharing an older person's home without paying a fair share of the expenses when requested

Violation of Rights and Freedoms

- interfering with spiritual practices, customs or traditions
- opening, tampering or redirecting mail
- keeping someone in a hospital or institution

- without a legitimate reason
- withholding important information
- inappropriately restraining or confining

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, or they may have concerns about having to move from their home or community. They may also feel a sense of family loyalty. Often, older adults may not be aware of people and resources that can help.

Who can help?

It is important that older persons have access to information to make informed decisions and be aware of available help. This may include support and assistance from family members or friends, health care providers, social services, police, legal professionals and/or members of faith communities. No one ever deserves to be abused or neglected.