

Elder Abuse

Lifelong Mental Health Management: Adulthood

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Abuse can take many forms

Approximately four per cent of elder Canadians living in private homes report being abused.* This abuse, which most often affects adults who are frail or dependent, can take many forms:

- ◆ **Physical Abuse:** assault, sexual abuse or the withholding of food or medical attention.
- ◆ **Psychological Abuse:** verbal assault, social isolation, lack of affection or lack of input into decisions that affect them.
- ◆ **Neglect:** when the caregiver does not meet the elder's needs.
- ◆ **Financial Abuse:** the misuse of the elder's property or funds.

The abused often blame themselves, or do not report the abuse for fear of embarrassment or being sent to an institution.



**Source: Elder Abuse Fact Sheet, National Clearing House on Family Violence, Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Health Canada*

Looking for signs of abuse

Physical Abuse

- ◆ Frequent unexplained injuries
- ◆ Reluctance to seek treatment
- ◆ Disorientation or grogginess
- ◆ Fear in presence of caregiver

Psychological Abuse

- ◆ Elder excluded from discussions of issues that effect them
- ◆ Lack of compassion shown to elder by children or caregivers
- ◆ Social isolation
- ◆ Verbal assault

Neglect

- ◆ Malnutrition
- ◆ Decline in personal hygiene
- ◆ Lack of medical attention

Financial Abuse

- ◆ Pension cheques cashed without authorization
- ◆ Bills regularly unpaid
- ◆ Standard of living does not seem to match income level
- ◆ Sudden sale of property
- ◆ Sudden revision of will with new beneficiary
- ◆ Suspicious granting of power of attorney

Adapted from Health Canada (1990)

What to ask the elder

- ◆ *Has anyone at home ever hurt you?*
- ◆ *Has anyone ever touched you without consent?*
- ◆ *Has anyone ever made you do things you didn't want to do?*
- ◆ *Has anyone ever taken anything of yours without asking?*
- ◆ *Has anyone ever scolded or threatened you?*
- ◆ *Have you ever signed any documents you didn't understand?*
- ◆ *Are you afraid of anyone at home?*
- ◆ *Are you alone a lot?*
- ◆ *Has anyone ever failed to help you take care of yourself when you needed help?*