

# Elder Abuse

## Information for older adults, families and caregivers

Read this pamphlet to learn about:

- what is elder abuse
- the different types of elder abuse
- who to call for help



Patient Education



**UHN**

Toronto General  
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## **What is elder abuse?**

Elder abuse occurs when an older adult is mistreated or harmed, typically by a person or people they should be able to trust. It can happen once, or it may be repeated over time.

## **How common is elder abuse?**

About 1 in 10 older adults in Canada will experience one or more forms of abuse at some point during their later years.

## **Older adults may experience abuse from:**

- family members, relatives and care providers who are the most common abusers
- anyone who has contact or a relationship with an older person
- strangers who can often target vulnerable or isolated older adults living in the community

## **Where does it happen?**

Elder abuse can happen anywhere and usually happens in the home. It can also happen in hospitals, retirement homes and nursing homes.

## **What are the different types of elder abuse?**

### **Emotional**

The abuser may threaten, scream at, frighten, insult or purposely ignore the older person.

### **Neglect**

The abuser may withhold food, medications or health services from the older person.

## **Physical**

There are many examples of physical abuse:

- hitting or pushing
- grabbing or shaking
- pulling hair
- throwing objects at the person

The abuser could also lock the older person in their room or keep them in bed or in a chair.

## **Financial**

The abuser may take the older person's money (cash, pension cheques, savings) or force the older person to sell their home or other assets and valuables.

## **Sexual**

The abuser may force any type of unwanted sexual act on the older person (sexual touching, kissing, hugging or intercourse).

## **What are the signs that elder abuse could be happening?**

The older person:

- has bruises, cuts, skin sores or broken bones
- has lost weight
- has dirty clothes, hair, teeth and skin
- has not been given their pills regularly
- may feel sad or depressed or very afraid to talk about the abuse
- may act very uncomfortable or withdrawn in the presence of certain people

## **Why might an abused older person not ask for help?**

The older person may:

- be afraid of what the abuser will do to them
- worry they will be put in a nursing home
- feel embarrassed
- feel no one will believe them
- not be able to tell someone about the abuse
- have difficulty speaking, speak a different language or be confused
- not recognize what is happening as abuse
- try to rationalize the abuse as being justified or better than another action

## **Who can I call for help?**

### **Emergency reporting to police:**

If you are in immediate danger dial 911 for emergency services.

### **Non emergency reporting and assistance:**

#### **Seniors Safety Line**

The Seniors Safety Line provides information, referrals and support in over 150 languages 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This hotline is toll-free and confidential for seniors experiencing abuse, including financial, physical, sexual, mental abuse and neglect.

Toll Free: 1 866 299 1011 or call 211

#### **Elder Abuse Ontario**

Elder Abuse Ontario is a provincial, charitable, non-profit organization focused on supporting the implementation of The Ontario Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse. For information on elder abuse, visit their website.

Website: [www.elderabuseontario.com](http://www.elderabuseontario.com)

## **Victim Support Line**

The Victim Support Line is a multilingual phone service that provides information for all victims of crime. This toll-free hotline offers information and referrals to support services available in your area.

Toll Free: 1 888 579 2888 or Toronto: 416 314 2447

## **Resources and services**

### **Circle of Care**

Circle of Care provides counselling and help in developing a safety plan, and information on referrals to legal, financial, housing and community resources.

Phone: 416 635 2860, 7 days a week, 7:00 am – 8:30 pm

### **Crisis Outreach Service for Seniors (COSS)**

The COSS Team is an on-call mobile crisis intervention and outreach service for seniors that provides short-term response 365 days a year, 7 days a week.

Area: From Yonge Street to Warden Avenue, operates between Bloor Street/ Danforth Avenue and Lake Ontario. Between Yonge Street and Jane Street, this service operates between Eglinton Avenue W. and Lake Ontario.

Phone: 416 640 1459, 7 days a week, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

### **Family Service Toronto – Pat’s Place**

Pat’s Place is a temporary safe haven for adults 60 years and older experiencing abuse. Offers a 1-bedroom apartment in a secure location. Provides counselling, crisis intervention, safety planning and referral to community resources. There is no charge for rent at Pat’s Place. People are asked to contribute to the day-to-day costs, such as buying food, clothing, medications and doing laundry.

Phone: 416 595 9618

Website: [www.familyserVICEToronto.org/our-services/programs-and-services/pats-place](http://www.familyserVICEToronto.org/our-services/programs-and-services/pats-place)

## **Toronto Police Services**

If you need more information about investigating a criminal case of elder abuse, call the Toronto Police Service.

Distress Centre: 416 808 4357 (HELP)

Elder Abuse Coordinator: 416 808 0130

## **Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE)**

Community-based legal clinic that provides services to low-income seniors along with public education.

Phone: 416 598 2656, open Monday to Friday 9:00 am – 5:00 pm



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