

What Is Elder Abuse?



Elder Abuse
Prevention
Ontario

Elder Abuse is defined by the *World Health Organization* as “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.”

Often, an older person may experience more than one type of abuse at the same time.

Types and Warning Signs of Elder Abuse



Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is the most common form of elder abuse reported. It is defined as any improper conduct, done with or without the informed consent of the older adult that results in a monetary or personal gain to the abuser and/or monetary or personal loss for the older adult.

- Misuse of power of attorney
- Unexplained transactions, or unauthorized withdrawal of funds
- Suspicious or forged signatures on cheques or other documents
- Standard of living not in keeping with person's income or assets
- Changing names on a will, bank account, or title to a house without permission
- Moving into the home of an older person and failing to contribute to household costs



Neglect

Neglect is not meeting the basic needs of the older person. It can include the intentional withholding of care or the basic necessities of life or the unintentional failure to provide proper care to an older adult due to lack of knowledge, experience.

- Withholding care or denying access to necessary health services or medical attention/treatment
- Improper use of medication, over or under medicating
- Unexplained conditions such as dehydration or pressure sores
- Lack of hygiene
- Malnourishment or weight loss
- Poorly maintained living environment
- Abandonment or confinement of senior



Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse is any action, verbal or non-verbal, that lessens a person's sense of identity, dignity and self-worth.

- Signs of depression, anxiety, confusion
- Appears fearful or nervous around caregiver or other persons
- Reluctance to talk openly or make eye contact
- Isolated from family members or friends
- Older adult or pets are threatened harm
- Removal of decision making



Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any sexual behavior directed toward an older adult without that person's full knowledge and consent; it includes coercing an older person through force, threats, or other means into unwanted sexual activity. Sexual contact with any person incapable of giving consent (dementia) is also sexual abuse.

- Trusted other makes inappropriate sexual comments
- Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind
- Inappropriate touching
- Making sexual remarks or suggestions
- Joking of sexual nature
- Sending or receiving of sexually explicit photos



Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any act of violence or rough handling that may or may not result in physical injury but causes physical discomfort or pain.

- Unexplained injuries such as broken bones, bruises, cuts
- Injuries for which explanation does not fit evidence
- Unusual patterns of injuries
- Rough handling
- Over or under-use of medication
- Restraints or confinement in a room or house

Why Does Elder Abuse Matter In Ontario?

Elder abuse is a serious and growing injustice in our community.

The magnitude and extent of the elder abuse cases occurring in Ontario is not fully known, due in part to limited data collection and underreported cases.

Based on Census data (2020), there are currently 2 million older adults over the age of 65 residing in Ontario. Studies indicate that between 8% to 10% of older adults are experiencing some form of abuse, which translates to over 200,000 older adults in Ontario alone, experiencing, or at-risk of elder abuse.

What Are The Impacts of Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse can have long term effects on the health and well-being of older persons. It can harm their physical and mental health, damage social and family relationships, cause devastating financial loss, lead to early death, and more. Abuse of any form can leave the abused person feeling isolated, fearful, and depressed.

Elder abuse not only impacts the individuals who experience it, but also the wider community. It can cost our broader society in health care and social service costs.

It can also increase the social isolation of older adults, allowing our communities to lose out on older adult's contributions to our workforce, volunteerism, and family activities.

Reporting

We are all responsible for preventing and addressing elder abuse.

Crime Stoppers

1-800-222-TIPS (8477)

Call if you suspect elder abuse and/or if a criminal act has happened. You will remain anonymous. You do not appear in court.

Anyone who sees or suspects abuse in a Long-Term Care Home or Retirement Home must report it. This obligation to report does not apply to residents.

Long-Term Care ACTION Line

1-866-434-0144

www.health.gov.on.ca

Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA)

1-855-275-7472

www.rhra.ca

It is vital that everyone become informed and understand that we all have a role to play to prevent elder abuse and neglect.

To seek support or find help from anywhere in Ontario, call:

Seniors Safety Line

1-866-299-1011

A safe, confidential place for older adults and those who care about them to talk to someone about situations where they feel they are being abused or mistreated, or to receive information about elder abuse services in their local areas. Interpreter services are available 24 hours a day/7 days a week in more than 200 languages upon request.



**Elder Abuse
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Ontario**

For more information and resources:

Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario

1-416-916-6728

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