



JUNE IS ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH



WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

As older adults become more physically frail, they are less able to take care of themselves, stand up to bullying, or fight back if attacked. They also may not see or hear as well, or think as clearly as they used to, leaving them more vulnerable to abuse/neglect. Elder abuse includes physical, emotional, or sexual harm, financial exploitation, or neglect by people who are supposed to care for them.

If you suspect that an elderly person is at risk from a neglectful or overwhelmed caregiver, or being preyed upon financially, it's important to speak up. *Everyone deserves to live in safety, with dignity and respect!*

WATCH FOR THESE SIGNS OF ABUSE:

- Seems depressed, confused, or withdrawn
- Isolated from family and friends
- Has unexplained bruises, burns, or scars
- Appears dirty, underfed, dehydrated, over or under medicated, or not receiving needed care for medical problems
- Has bed sores or other preventable conditions
- Recent changes in banking or spending patterns



TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE:

Abuse of elders' takes many different forms, some involving intimidation or threats against the elderly, some involving neglect, and others involving financial trickery. The most common are:

PHYSICAL ELDER ABUSE: Use of force against an elderly person that results in physical pain, injury, or impairment.

EMOTIONAL ELDER ABUSE: The treatment of an older adult in ways that cause emotional or psychological pain or distress.

SEXUAL ELDER ABUSE: Contact with an elderly person without their consent.

FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION: The unauthorized use of an elderly person's funds or property, either by a caregiver or an outside scam artist.

HEALTHCARE FRAUD AND ABUSE: Carried out by unethical doctors, nurses, hospital personnel, and other professional care providers.

ELDER NEGLECT: Failure to fulfill a caretaking obligation.



Elder abuse is a serious problem in the United States. The available information is an underestimate of the problem because the number of nonfatal injuries is limited to older adults who are treated in emergency departments. The information doesn't include those treated by other providers or those that do not need or do not seek treatment. Additionally, many cases are not reported because elders are afraid or unable to tell police, friends, or family about the violence. Victims have to decide whether to tell someone they are being hurt or continue being abused by someone they depend upon or care for deeply.

Elder abuse is common. Abuse, including neglect and exploitation, is experienced by about 1 in 10 people aged 60 and older who live at home. From 2002 to 2016, more than 643,000 older adults were treated in the emergency department for nonfatal assaults and over 19,000 homicides occurred.



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PREVENTING ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Prevention tips if you're a caregiver:

- Take immediate steps to relieve stress and burnout. Stress is a major contributor to elder abuse and neglect. You can help reduce your stress levels by regularly practicing stress-relieving techniques such as yoga, meditation, or deep breathing exercises.
- Request help from friends, relatives, or local respite care agencies or find an adult daycare program. Every caregiver needs to take regular breaks from the stress of caring for an elder and to attend to their own needs, if only for a couple of hours.
- Learn techniques for getting your anger under control.
- Take care of yourself. If you are not getting enough rest, you are much more likely to succumb to anger. Eat a healthy diet, get regular exercise, and take care of your own medical needs.
- Seek help for depression. Family caregivers are especially at risk for depression, but there are plenty of things you can do to boost your mood and outlook and overcome the problem.
- Find a support group for caregivers of the elderly. Sharing your concerns and experiences with others facing the same challenges can help relieve the isolation you may be feeling as a caregiver. It can also be a great place to gain valuable tips and insight into caring for an elder.
- Get help for any substance abuse issues. It's never easy, but there are plenty of actions you can take to address drug or alcohol abuse.
- Get professional help. If you can't seem to stop yourself no matter how hard you try, it's time to get help by talking to a therapist



Prevention tips if you're a friend or neighbor:

- **Call and visit as often as you can**, helping the elder to see you as a trusted confidante.
 - **Offer to stay with the elder so the caregiver can have a break**—on a regular basis, if possible.
 - **Monitor the elder's medications** to ensure the amounts being taken correspond with the prescription dates.
 - **Watch for financial abuse** by asking the elder if you can check their bank accounts and credit card statements for unauthorized transactions.
 - **Identify the warning signs** of abuse or neglect and report it without delay.



HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM ABUSE AS AN ELDER

- Make sure your financial and legal affairs are in order. If they aren't, enlist professional help to get them in order, with the assistance of a trusted friend or relative if necessary.
- Keep in touch with family and friends and avoid becoming isolated.
- If you are unhappy with the care you're receiving, whether it's in your own home or in a care facility, speak up. Tell someone you trust or call an elder abuse helpline.

For more information, please contact: SANE Clinic at 520-562-5151 or email sane@grhc.org