

Indicators

There are many signs an older woman may be the victim of domestic violence or family violence. These include:

- The granting of a Power of Attorney under unusual circumstances
- Significant or sudden withdrawal of money from bank accounts
- Dismissal of physical injuries, anxiety or depression as 'age related' - "She's getting old"
- Lack of adequate medications and other health supports
- Anxiety around their spouse/partner or abusive family member
- Reluctance to seek assistance
- Substance abuse
- Isolation

No matter what age a person is they have a right to protection from physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse. They also have a right to safety and security and to participate in decision making regarding their well being.

If you are an older woman or know an older woman who is being abused it is important to know that help and support is available.

Things you can do:

- Talk to someone you can trust about what is happening
- Seek legal / financial advice
- Apply for a Protection Order
- Seek the support of a professional counsellor

You can ring the

Domestic Violence Prevention Centre

55329 000

- To talk
- To get support
- To seek information
- To arrange to see a counselor

Open from Monday, Tuesday,

Thursday, Friday

9am—5pm

Wednesdays 9am—1pm

Admin: **55 914222** Facsimile: **55711508**

Website www.domesticviolence.com.au

PO Box 409 Southport QLD 4215

Other Useful Telephone Numbers

D V Connect Domestic Violence Line
1800 811 811 7 Days, 24hours

Women's Legal Service
1800 677 278

Elder Abuse Prevention Unit
1300 651 192

Older Person's Advocacy Service
1800 818 338

Violence Against Older Women

It Does Happen



Produced by
Domestic Violence Prevention Centre
Gold Coast

Violence Against Older Women—It Does Happen

It is a sad fact that many older women experience domestic violence or family violence from their spouses, partners, their family or caregivers. The abuse may take the form of:

Fear: Is the most powerful way someone may control another person. Fear can be created by looks, gestures, destruction of property, possession of weapons or any other behavior which can be used to intimidate.

Physical Violence: Behaviors range from hitting, shoving, kicking, bruising to homicide. Physical abuse also includes neglecting to provide for basic needs such as food, hygienic living conditions and health care.

Sexual Abuse: Includes unwanted touching, humiliating sexual comments, indecent acts and forced sexual intercourse.

Emotional Abuse: Includes name calling, put downs, threats, mind games and any other behavior which undermines her confidence and well being.

Financial Abuse: Includes misusing or illegally using her property, possessions or money, withholding money, applying pressure to sign over money or assets or misusing a Power of Attorney.

Social Abuse: Includes denial of social contacts including friends and other family members. It may also include a lack of freedom of religious or cultural expression or participation.

Many older women have lived with the same partner for many years and the abuse may have been occurring since they were first married or commenced living together. Some other older women also experience abuse from other family members. The abuse may be seen like a 'normal' part of family life.

For many other women, violence and abuse enters their lives in later years. They may be starting a new relationship following a death or divorce. Their previous relationship/s may not have been abusive and they may find themselves the victim of domestic violence for the first time, in later years.

No matter how long the abuse has been occurring the use of **Violence Is NEVER OK** It is not the victim's fault that they are being abused nor is it their responsibility to stop the violence

There are many reasons older women may find it difficult or impossible to leave an abusive partner or family member. Many older women, because of generational values may consider what's happening to them normal, because of how they were raised and what was considered acceptable "back then." She may be embarrassed or ashamed to disclose the abuse. Due to life circumstances specific to the aging population, many older women deal with a special set of obstacles and concerns not encountered by younger women.

Older women may not seek help because:

May not identify as abused: Abuse against older women is often well hidden, has been ongoing for many years and many may not call their experiences as domestic or family violence.

Fear: They may be afraid of the consequences of intervention including, retaliation, appearing in court, leaving home, being placed in a home, divorce, becoming estranged from friends and other family members including grandchildren, and starting over.

Loss of Security: They may be physically, socially and financially dependent on the abusive partner / family member and are worried for the future.

Lack of Awareness: They may have lack of awareness of their rights and services available.

Medical Condition: Some older women may have a physical or mental disability which could make it more difficult for them to access support. This is further exacerbated if the abusing partner/ family member is also their carer.

Language & Cultural Barriers: Women from culturally diverse backgrounds face many added barriers including racism and discrimination.