

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse comes in various forms. Abuse can be a single or repeated act or even a lack of appropriate action that causes harm or distress to the older adult. Elder abuse is seen in relationships where the older adult has an expectation of trust with the care provider/family member/other trusted individual or partner. ⁽³⁾

Why it is important

- Under-reporting, confusion about what constitutes elder abuse, a general lack of awareness, among other factors have made it a challenge to report prevalence of elder abuse; based on the available data, it is estimated that 4% to 10% of older adults in Canada experience some type of abuse. ⁽¹⁾

Common Causes ⁽²⁾

- Financial abuse (the most common form of elder abuse, theft or misuse of the person's money or property)
- Physical abuse (physical pain or injury willfully inflicted, unreasonable confinement and punishment causing physical harm, withholding physical necessities)
- Sexual abuse (sexual activity or contact resulting from threats or force without the elder adult's consent)
- Psychological or emotional abuse (infliction of mental anguish, provoking fear, intentional isolation)
- Neglect (can be either intentional or unintentional and occurs when the care-provider fails to meet senior's needs)
- Abuse can be perpetuated through a number of factors such as gender, race, religion, age discrimination, geographic location, economic status

Key Considerations

- Risk factors for elder abuse include cognitive impairment, physical dependency, isolation, inability to express wishes, lack of choice and economic vulnerability ⁽¹⁾
- Signs and symptoms of elder abuse: social withdrawal, depression, fear, anxiety, unexplained physical injury, lack of necessities, unusual banking activity ⁽²⁾
- A handout on Safety Planning for Older Adults can be found here:
<http://www.seniors.gov.on.ca/en/elderabuse/docs/safetyplanning.pdf>
- A handout for family members or caregivers concerned about their loved one can be found here:
<http://www.seniors.gov.on.ca/en/elderabuse/docs/needtoknow.pdf>

References

1. CNA. (2013). *Elder Abuse*. Retrieved March 19, 2014 from: <http://www.nurseone.ca/Default.aspx?portlet=StaticHtmlViewerPortlet&ptdi=661>
2. Government of Ontario. (2008). *What You Need to Know About Elder Abuse*. Retrieved March 19, 2014 from: <http://www.seniors.gov.on.ca/en/elderabuse/docs/needtoknow.pdf>
3. The Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. (2014). *Forms of Elder Abuse*. Retrieved March 19, 2014 from: <http://www.onpea.org/english/elderabuse/formsofelderabuse.html>