

Working Together To Prevent Elder Abuse and Neglect



Every year, tens of thousands of elderly Canadians are abused in their own homes, in relatives' homes, and even in facilities responsible for their care. You may suspect that an elderly person you know is being harmed physically or emotionally. By learning the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and how to act on behalf of an elderly person who is being abused, you'll not only be helping someone else but strengthening your own defences against elder abuse in the future.



Signs and symptoms of Elder Abuse

Physical abuse

- Unexplained injuries: bruises/welts/scars (especially if symmetrical on two sides of the body)/broken bones/sprains/dislocations
- Report of drug overdose or failure to take medication regularly
- Signs of restraint: rope marks on wrists
- Caregiver's refusal to allow you to see the elder alone



Emotional abuse

- Caregiver behaviour: threatening/belittling/controlling
- Elder behaviour that mimics dementia: rocking/ sucking/ mumbling to oneself



Sexual abuse

- Bruises around breasts or genitals
- Unexplained: venereal disease/genital infections/vaginal or anal bleeding
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing



Neglect by caregivers or self-neglect

- Unusual weight loss, malnutrition, dehydration
- Unsanitary conditions: dirt/bugs/soiled bedding and clothes/ poor hygiene/ untreated bed sores
- Unsuitable clothing or covering for the weather
- Unsafe conditions: no heat or running water/faulty electrical wiring/ fire hazards/desertion in public place



Financial exploitation

- Elder's Financial Condition: significant withdrawals from accounts/ items or cash missing from household
- Suspicious changes to: wills/power of attorney/ titles/ policies
- Unpaid bills
- Suspicious financial activity: ATM withdrawal when the account holder is bedridden/ names added on signature cards
- Unnecessary services, goods, or subscriptions



Healthcare fraud and abuse

- Duplicate billings for the same medical service or device
- Evidence of being overmedicated or under medicated
- Evidence of inadequate care when bills are paid in full
- Problems with the care facility:
 - Poorly trained, poorly paid, or insufficient staff
 - Inadequate responses to questions about care

**Preventing elder abuse and neglect
is everybody's business**