

Elder Abuse: - What is it? Who does it affect?

Learn to recognise the signs

Elder abuse is defined as any intentional or negligent action that harms,-or creates the risk of harm-to, a vulnerable older adult. The following constitute forms of “elder abuse”

1. **Physical Abuse:** Inflicting, or threatening to inflict, physical pain or injury on a vulnerable older person, or depriving them of a basic need.
2. **Emotional Abuse:** Inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress on an older person through verbal or nonverbal acts.
3. **Sexual Abuse:** Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.
4. **Exploitation:** Illegal taking, misuse, or concealment of funds, property, or assets of a vulnerable older person.
5. **Neglect:** Refusal or failure by those responsible to provide food, shelter, health care or protection for a vulnerable older person.
6. **Abandonment:** The desertion of a vulnerable older person by anyone who has assumed the responsibility for care or custody of that person.

What Are The Warning Signs of Elder Abuse?

Because many older abuse victims are ashamed of their situations,-or they are afraid of retribution if they speak out,-it may be difficult for older abuse victims to talk about what’s happening.

It’s important to remember that elder abuse happens to men and women in all racial, ethnic, and financial situations. The best thing you can do to stop elder abuse is to be aware of the warning signs.

- **Physical Elder Abuse**
Look for bruises, pressure marks on the skin, broken bones, scrapes or abrasions, and burn marks.
- **Neglect**
Neglect is a common,-and more subtle,-form of elder abuse. Look for bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, and unusual weight loss.
- **Sexual Elder Abuse**
Bruises around the breasts or genital area are common forms of sexual elder abuse.

- **Financial Elder Abuse**
Sudden changes in financial situations may be the result of financial exploitation, or the elder may be a victim of an investment scam.
- **Verbal and Emotional Elder Abuse**
Look for unusual behaviour, including belittling, threats, and other uses of power and control by spouses, friends or caregivers.
- **Caregiver Elder Abuse**
Look for frequent arguments between the older person and the caregiver, and strained or tense relationships.

Even though elder abuse is a difficult situation to talk about, it's very important that older adults have people who are willing to look out for their welfare.

If you suspect elder abuse, don't be afraid to ask questions and report what you see.

Trust your instinct,- call the Elder Abuse Helpline 1300 651 192 or visit www.qld.gov.au/trustyourinstinct