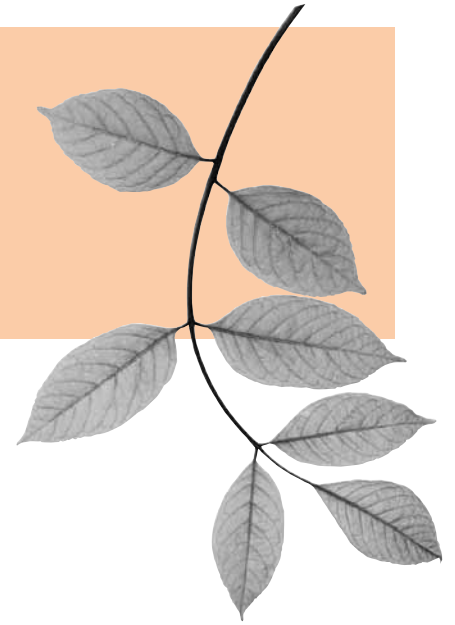


Domestic violence between older persons



What is domestic violence?

- Domestic violence occurs when one person in an intimate relationship attempts to dominate and control the other person.
- Domestic violence grown old is when relational violence starts earlier in life and continues into later life.
- Sometimes domestic abuse begins in later life.

Different types of domestic violence

- **Physical abuse** — the deliberate use of physical force intended to intimidate or inflict bodily harm or discomfort. Examples include slapping, hitting, punching, pushing, burning, choking, hair-pulling, inappropriate restraint and shaking.
- **Sexual abuse** — any sexual behaviour directed towards a partner without his or her consent or full knowledge. Forced sex, even by a spouse or intimate partner with whom a person also has consensual sex, is an act of violence. Examples include harassment, including demeaning remarks about intimate body parts, and any forced sexual contact, from unwanted touching to rape.
- **Emotional abuse** — non-verbal or verbal acts that cause mental anguish and are intended to diminish the dignity and self-worth of another person. Examples include threats, insults, name-calling, swearing, isolation from supports, intimidation, extreme jealousy, threats to leave or divorce, threats to put a partner into an institution and silent treatment.
- **Financial abuse** — any act involving the misuse of a person's money, property, or assets. Examples include theft, spending money on alcohol or drugs, pressure to change a will or Enduring Power of Attorney, gambling, restricting access to money, redeeming RRSPs without a partner's knowledge, and theft of bank cards and access codes.

When abuse begins or gets worse in later life it is often linked to life changes or times of transition such as retirement, disability, changing roles or sexual changes.

Why would an older person stay in an abusive relationship?

- **Fear** that disclosure could lead to something worse.
- **Fear** of the unknown or of being alone.
- **Fear** of institutionalization — if the older person is frail, ill, or disabled, he or she may be afraid of being forced to move into a care facility.
- **Dependence** due to physical health problems, lack of housing options, financial problems or emotional reasons.
- **Values/culture** — in some cultures, separation, divorce and legal orders of protection may carry a stigma. There could also be a sense of obligation to care for an aging abusive partner.
- **Shame and guilt** — an older person might blame himself or herself for the abuse and feel ashamed to talk about it with anyone.
- **Denial and minimization** — an older person may refuse to report the abuse or may minimize what happened to protect an abusive partner.
- **Lack of information** about options and/or available support services and resources.

Tips to share with older persons: Domestic violence prevention

- Attend support groups for spouses and learn about domestic violence services available in the community.
- Talk to someone you trust to help you to explore your options and plan for your safety.
- Take care of your health and seek professional help for any alcohol, drug or mental health concerns.
- Stay active in the community and connected with family and friends.
- Know your rights and never be afraid to ask for help.
- Some forms of abuse (e.g., physical and sexual assault, harassment and theft) are a crime — contact the RCMP for assistance.



Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity

You are not alone — help and support are available

Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit: phone 456-3946; toll-free 1-800-661-0408, ext. 3946