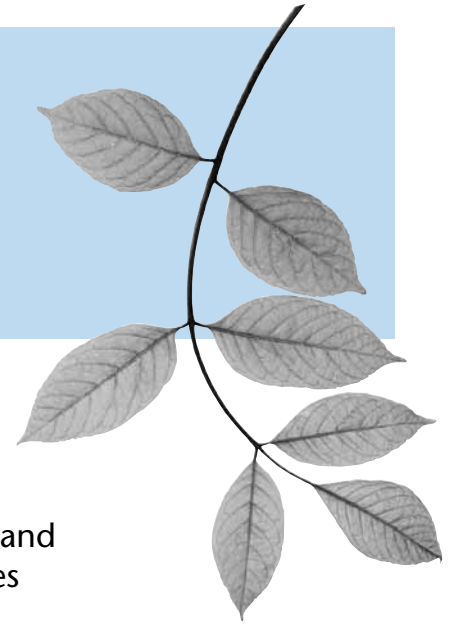


Neglect and self-neglect of older persons



What is neglect?

- Neglect can be intentional (active) or unintentional (passive).
- Intentional or active neglect occurs when a caregiver knowingly and intentionally fails to provide an older person with basic necessities or care.
- Unintentional or passive neglect occurs when a caregiver unknowingly fails to provide basic necessities or care. There are a number of reasons for this, such as the caregiver's lack of experience, information or ability.

Neglect involves a failure to provide an older person with necessities and care

- basic needs such as food, water, housing, clothing, or heat;
- appropriate hygiene and personal care;
- medical care or access to medical care;
- necessary health aids or equipment for daily living such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, walkers, canes, or grab bars;
- a clean and safe place to live;
- transportation to and from necessary appointments; or
- access to friends, family, or companionship inside or outside the home.

Older persons who neglect themselves often live alone; isolation is a major risk factor.

Neglect can also include these actions

- leaving a vulnerable older person alone too long;
- failing to provide adequate supervision or safety precautions;
- abandonment; or
- mismanagement of medication.

Indicators of neglect

- malnourishment;
- unkempt appearance;
- untreated medical conditions;
- missing dentures, glasses or hearing aids; or
- lack of heat or electricity.

What is self-neglect?

- Self-neglect occurs when an older person, by choice or due to a lack of awareness or ability, lives in ways that disregards his or her own health or safety. It can also include when an older person refuses needed care or help with daily activities.
- Examples of self-neglect include inadequate personal hygiene, not taking needed medication, poor and unsafe living conditions, lack of heat and proper nutrition.
- Self-neglect may occur in conjunction with other issues such as alcohol or drug problems, mental health challenges or dementia.
- Older persons who neglect themselves can be more at risk for falls, medication errors, isolation and depression.

Tips to share with older persons: Prevention and staying safe

- Take care of your health and seek help for any alcohol, drug or mental health concerns.
- Stay active in the community and connected to family and friends.
- You have rights! Never be afraid to ask for help.
- If you or someone you know is being neglected or you are concerned about an older person's self-neglect, talk to someone you trust such a doctor, social service worker, or family and friends.



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