

# Physical abuse of older persons

Physical abuse is the deliberate use of physical force or rough-handling intended to intimidate, or cause injury or discomfort. A person does not have to be injured to have experienced physical abuse.

## Examples of physical abuse

- include hitting, punching, pushing, burning or scalding, pulling hair, tripping, shaking, choking, pinching and use of weapons.

## Physical abuse might also include

- misuse of medication (i.e., over-medication, withholding medication, sedation);
- unnecessary physical restraint;
- force-feeding; or
- forced confinement (i.e., in a room, bed or chair).

Physical abuse can also be sexual in nature. Sexual abuse is any sexual behaviour directed towards a person without that person's consent or full knowledge.

- Examples include inappropriate exposure, unwanted sexual comments, unnecessary help with dressing or hygiene, fondling or forced sexual acts and being coerced into sexual acts.

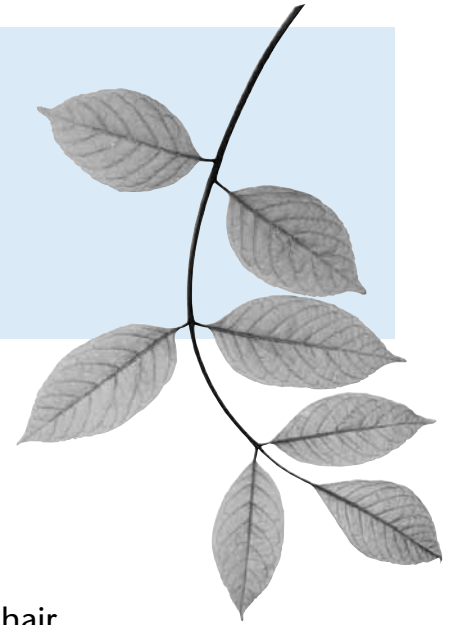
## Abuse can happen to anyone

- Abuse can happen regardless of activity level, physical or mental ability, income, gender, culture, health, or level of education.
- Abuse can happen to an older person who lives alone, with family, or in a care facility.

## Who are abusers?

- Most often the abuser is someone known to the victim, such as a family member (adult child, spouse, grandchild), friend, neighbour, care provider or landlord. However, an abuser could also be a stranger.
- An abuser is often someone the older person depends on to provide care.
- The abuser is often a person in a position of trust.

**Older people are encouraged to stay connected: isolation is the single biggest risk factor for physical abuse.**



Tips for older persons: Abuse prevention and staying safe

- Talk to someone you trust (e.g., doctor, police, clergy, Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit, trusted family member or friend) who can help you explore your options and plan for your safety.
- Stay active in the community and connected with trusted family and friends.
- Develop a buddy system with a friend outside the home and plan for regular contact. Maintain as much control over your life as possible. Know your rights and never be afraid to ask for help.
- Physical and sexual assault are crimes under the Criminal Code of Canada — call the RCMP (867-667-5555) 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