

Elder Abuse—Spotting the Signs

Excerpt from www.mayoclinic.com/health/elderabuse

Perhaps you suspect your elderly neighbor isn't caring for herself the way she needs to, but you aren't certain. Or maybe you wonder about some bruises you've seen on your aging uncle. You can't get rid of the nagging feeling that something's not right. But is it elder abuse? What should you look for, and what can you do? Knowing more about elder abuse and who to call for assistance can help you protect your loved ones.

What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse occurs when someone knowingly or unknowingly causes harm or a risk of harm to an older adult. It can take several forms, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse or neglect.

People age 80 and older, especially women, are at a greater risk of experiencing elder abuse. Older adults who are dependent on others for basic care are particularly vulnerable.

What should you look for?

If you're concerned an older adult might be abused, knowing the signs and symptoms of abuse can help you determine if a problem exists. These signs and symptoms may include:

Physical injury. Examples of questionable injuries include bruises, cuts, burn or rope marks, and broken bones or sprains that can't be explained. Other signs may be comments about being battered, or the refusal of a caregiver to allow you to visit the older person alone.

Lack of physical care. Indications of substandard physical care include dehydration, malnourishment, weight loss and poor hygiene. Bed sores, soiled bedding, and unmet medical needs may also indicate a problem.

Unusual Behaviors. Changes in an older person's behavior or emotional state may suggest a problem. Examples include agitation, withdrawal, fear or anxiety, apathy or reports of being treated improperly.

Unaccounted for financial changes. Missing money or valuables, unexplained financial transactions, unpaid bills despite available funds and sudden transfer of assets may indicate abuse.

If you suspect
abuse, you
should report it
immediately by
calling

1-800-336-
4316

This number is
answered 24
hours per day,

See our Spring 2006 newsletter for more information
on Elder Abuse.



**For more information about Elder
and Dependent Adult Abuse visit:**

www.elderabusecenter.org

www.mayoclinic.health/elder-abuse