

## *Abuse to Seniors can take many ugly forms*

### **Elder Abuse**

Abuse can take many forms. The effects can be devastating and to make situations worse quite often the person abused may suffer from a disability or illness like Alzheimer's which prevents them from informing their close relatives or friends. Abuse in any of its forms can be inflicted upon seniors in the home or in residential care facilities.

The major forms of abuse to seniors include:

### **Physical abuse**

This is physical force which may or does result in physical pain, injury or suffering. Slapping, kicking, burning, beating are all forms as well as improper use of restraints on a person.

Signs to notice or be suspicious of:

Black eyes, bruising, burn marks, dislocations, untreated injuries, person complaining of being hit or badly treated or a change in their behaviour towards visitors, not being allowed to see the person on their own.

### **Sexual abuse**

This includes any sexual activity to which the senior or dependent adult has either not consented or is incapable of giving consent. Forms can range from exhibitionistic behaviour to criminal acts of sexual assault and rape.

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Signs to notice or be suspicious of:

Genital infections not given proper medical explanation, breast or genital bruising, torn or missing undergarments, direct claim by the person of being sexually assaulted.

### **Psychological abuse**

A person can be caused emotional pain or distress through intentional verbal or non-verbal acts. Threats of harm or isolation, intimidation, humiliation and harassment can all cause this abuse.

Signs to notice or be suspicious of:

Outbursts of emotional distress, being extremely withdrawn from visitors, behaviour out of the norm such as rocking or biting, direct claim of maltreatment.

### **Neglect**

Dependent adults or seniors can suffer neglect. This includes failure to support physical, emotional or safety requirements of the person. Examples of neglect include failure to provide adequate food and water, assist with daily living activities or clean soiled clothing or bedding.

Signs to notice or be suspicious of:

Sunken eyes or cracks around the mouth, untreated bed sores or rashes, malnutrition or rapid weight loss, soiled bedding, staff not providing help to residents who need assistance to eat.

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### **Self-Neglect**

This occurs when senior or dependent adults fail to meet their own physical or psychological needs or they threaten their own safety or health. This would include not taking medication or not being able to manage physical needs.

Signs to notice or be suspicious of:

Malnutrition, prescriptions not filled, poor attention to personal health care or safety or their home surroundings.

### **Financial abuse**

This occurs when someone misuses or exploits the money or property of a senior or dependent adult for uses other than for that person. Improper use may be made of a power of attorney, cashing cheques or stealing directly from the person.

Signs to notice or be suspicious of:

Unauthorised ATM withdrawals, disappearance of funds or possessions, sudden changes to will, appearance of 'new' relatives without notice, sudden transfer of assets.

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