



## What is Elder Abuse?

There are a number of ways in which an older person may be mistreated, harmed or distressed. Elder abuse may be:

- ◆ Physical;
- ◆ Financial;
- ◆ Sexual;
- ◆ Emotional;
- ◆ Neglect.

## Who is Abused?

- ◆ Both older men and women can be at risk of being abused.

## Who Abuses?

Anyone may be an abuser, but the following are most likely to be in a position to mistreat an older person:

- ◆ A partner, child or relative
- ◆ A friend or neighbour
- ◆ A health, social care or other worker
- ◆ Staff in residential or day care
- ◆ A volunteer worker
- ◆ Older people may also be abused by a person they are caring for.

## Where does Elder Abuse happen?

Elder Abuse can happen anywhere, but the most common places are:

- ◆ At home
- ◆ In hospital
- ◆ In residential and nursing homes
- ◆ At day care or social centres

## Why does it Happen?

There are many reasons why abuse occurs and these may vary with each incident. Many of its causes are not fully understood. At home some of the causes would appear to include:

- ◆ Poor quality long term relationships
- ◆ A carer's inability to provide the level of care required.
- ◆ A carer with mental or physical health problems.

In other settings abuse may be a symptom of a poorly run establishment. It is also likely to occur when staff are:

Inadequately trained

- ◆ Poorly supervised
- ◆ Have little support from management
- ◆
- ◆ Work in isolation.

## Tell-tale signs - from [www.irishhealth.com](http://www.irishhealth.com)

The symptoms of abuse vary with the nature of that abuse, but things to look out for include:

- ◆ Unusual or unexplained injuries, such as cuts, bruises or burns, for which strange and inconsistent explanations are given
- ◆ Unkempt appearance
- ◆ Pressure or bed sores
- ◆ Evidence of confinement, such as being tied to furniture or locked in a room
- ◆ Dehydration or malnutrition without a medical cause
- ◆ Fear, withdrawal, depression, or anxiety
- ◆ Visits to many doctors or hospitals
- ◆ Helplessness
- ◆ A hesitation to talk openly

## More Information On Elder Abuse

From [www.irishhealth.com](http://www.irishhealth.com)

Sometimes when abuse is suspected, it is not clear who might be perpetrating it. In the case of an older person living with their family, any one of a number of relatives, or even friends or neighbours, could be responsible. Similarly, in a care environment, a number of carers might share responsibility for the older person. Obviously, anyone who verbally assaults, threatens or insults an older person is the most likely person to be committing any abuse that might be occurring.

However, people who express indifference or anger towards an older person, or who blame that person for their own problems, may also resort to taking out their anger on the vulnerable person in their care. People with an alcohol or drug dependency problem are more likely to be abusive and also require money on a regular basis.

The most common form of abuse that older people face is psychological abuse at the hands of those who are responsible for caring for them. Some older people face daily threats of harm or violence, while others are regularly humiliated, intimidated or verbally abused. The victims of psychological abuse are often isolated from other contact, itself a form of abuse and have little outlet to report their experiences.

Many older people are the victims of financial abuse. In their twilight years, they may have amassed savings which are the reward for a lifetime's work. When mobility difficulties or mental impairment requires that they hand over some responsibility for their financial affairs to others, there is always the possibility that theft, fraud or exploitation can occur.

Continued overleaf...

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