Keeping yourself and your elderly loved ones safe

Elder abuse is common, affecting 1 out of every 10 elders. There are steps you can take to keep yourself or your loved ones safe, red-flags to look out for to learn whether abuse may be occurring, and support available in the event that a problem is detected.

Alosa Health

PACE — Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly

Balanced information for better care

Red flags

Are you an older adult or do you know one who…

- is socially isolated, depressed, or lonely?

- has experienced a decline in self-care abilities?

- depends on someone to provide everyday care?

- is unable to make decisions?

- is uncomfortable with the person providing care?

- has unexplained bruises or injuries?

- has just lost a loved one, such as a spouse?

- lacks basic hygiene, adequate food, or clean and appropriate clothing?

- lives in a home without adequate facilities (e.g., working stove, refrigerator, heat, cooling, plumbing, and electricity)?

- lives in a home that is dirty, in disrepair, cluttered, or has fire and safety hazards?

- has advancing memory problems, and is unsupervised?

What is elder abuse?

In Pennsylvania, elder abuse is the harm, exploitation, or neglect of a person 60 years old or older.

Abuse includes:

- **Physical or emotional abuse:** the infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or punishment with resulting physical harm, pain, or mental anguish

- **Sexual abuse** or harassment

- **Financial exploitation:** the illegal or improper use of an older adult's money or assets to benefit someone else

- **Neglect:** the failure of the caregiver, or the older person themselves, to provide goods and services to maintain mental and physical health

Who is at risk?

Elder abuse can happen to anyone, in any setting. People most at risk for abuse are:

- those with memory loss or other mental problems
- women
- socially isolated people
- the functionally impaired or people in poor physical health
- African American and Hispanic elders

What can I do to protect a loved one or myself?

- Learn the signs of elder abuse.
- Keep in touch with friends and family:
  — Find a buddy to check in with regularly.
  — Get involved with senior groups.
- Designate someone you trust to help manage your finances.
- Have an estate plan in place.
- Plan for nursing home placement or another supported care option.
- Consult with family or someone you trust before making large purchases, investments, or signing papers you do not understand.
- Do not provide personal information over the phone to someone you don't know.
- Hire a person for personal assistance or in-home care who has been properly screened, with a criminal background check.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about your concerns.

Resources in Pennsylvania, if you are concerned about elder abuse

In cases that are not life-threatening emergencies:

- **Pennsylvania abuse hotline (24/7):** 1-800-490-8505
- **Your local Area Agency on Aging:** aging.pa.gov/local-resources/Pages/AAA.aspx
- **Pennsylvania Department of Aging:** aging.pa.gov

For more information:
AlosaHealth.org/ElderAbuse

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These are general recommendations only; specific clinical decisions should be made by the treating physician based on an individual patient's clinical condition.

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