



Five Measures You Can Take to Protect Yourself

Nurses and other health-care providers want you to know they can help you deal with a serious threat to your health—abuse and neglect.

Did you know that signs of abuse and neglect are not always easy to spot? You may not even know that you are being mistreated. That's why it is so important to talk about the issue with a trained nurse or health-care provider.

Health-care providers who are trained in the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario's (RNAO) guideline, *Preventing and Addressing Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults* will do their best to make you feel cared for and respected. You can count on them to keep your experiences confidential. Or they will inform you if for any reason your information must be shared. You can also trust that they will continue to provide quality care and support even if you decline help for abuse.

What is Abuse and Neglect?

It means a wide variety of actions that cause the older person harm or distress from someone that they rely on or trust. These harmful acts may involve physical and emotional abuse, financial or sexual abuse, but also neglect. Here are a few less obvious examples:

Martha manages her elderly uncle Steven's money since his illness, but she doesn't agree with most of the items that Steven wants to buy. So she only gives him a small amount, and keeps the rest.

Josephine is a grandmother who is in the hospital for the first time in her life. The nurse overhears someone say to her, "Who's acting like a baby? I suppose you need to sleep with the light on. You're so pathetic."

Jorge tries to help his wife Susan since her stroke and recent fall. Every day Susan keeps moaning loudly from pain. It's really wearing on Jorge's nerves. One day he grabs her by the shoulders, shakes her and says, "Just tell me what you want!"

During busy shifts, sometimes Bernard gives extra medication to Elise, a patient who calls out and wanders the halls. This way, Elise will be drowsy and Bernard can get all of his work done.

Five Ways You Can Protect Yourself or Others

Talk to your health-care provider to learn more about your rights.

1. Learn about abuse and neglect and where you can get help. Contact the elder abuse organization in your area/region if you are concerned for yourself or someone you know.
2. If you or your loved one is in long-term care, help support high quality care by joining the resident council or family council.
3. Stay involved with people and activities in your community. People who are isolated can become at risk for abuse or neglect.
4. Talk to a trained nurse or health-care provider. Health-care providers who are trained in the RNAO Best Practice Guideline will listen carefully. They will find out what is most important to you, and will know about the places and people in your area who can help.

The benefits of talking to a trained health-care provider include:

- **Feeling understood.** They will not rush you or force you to open up because they know how difficult it is to talk about abuse and neglect.
- **Feeling respected.** A trained nurse or health-care provider will follow your wishes. You get to decide who you would like helping with discussions and care decisions. And nurses will involve the correct person to make decisions for you if you are not able to make decisions for yourself.
- **Feeling supported.** Trained health-care providers will explain, present and discuss options. They will also offer supports and suggestions that match your needs and wishes. Finally, they will advise you about any laws, policies, or professional obligations that may apply to the situation.

Once again, it's important for you to know that trained nurses and health-care providers will respect your decisions. They will do so even if it means that you choose to live at risk (unless you are mentally incapable of looking after yourself). They will also continue to provide quality care and support, even if you decline help for abuse or neglect. Let your health-care provider know if you would like to talk today.