

Elder abuse, signs and indicators

Physical	
<p>Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > physical actions > coercion, bullying > physical restraint > locking up in a room > confining to chair or bed > hitting, slapping, burning, pushing, punching, pinching, biting, arm twisting, cutting, hair pulling. 	<p>Signs/Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > carer/relative – overly protective or controlling, conflicting stories, delay in seeking care or reporting an injury, does not leave person unattended, older person described as ‘accident prone’ or having a history of sustaining injuries > physical – injuries in different stages of healing, broken bones, sprains, or dislocations, abrasions, welts, rashes, blisters, lacerations, swelling, signs of being restrained, weight loss, hair loss, poor hygiene > arousal – lack of awareness, drowsiness, vagueness, confusion, sleepiness > behavioural – cringing or acting fearful, agitation, catatonia, frequent requests for care or treatment for minor conditions, unexplained anger, fear or shutting down behaviour around the carer or relative.
Financial	
<p>Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > forgery > stealing > forced changes to a will > unusual transfers of money or property > withholding of funds from the older person > incurring debts for which the older person is responsible > failure of others to repay monies loaned > lack of financial information provided to an older person by their Power of Attorney. 	<p>Signs/Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > unpaid bills, inability of the older person to pay for necessities > defaulting on payments (e.g. rent, service fees) > missing documents > credit cards or personal belongings and unusual activity in bank accounts > changes to a will or other documents when appearing incapable or subject to possible coercion > confusion regarding assets property and income > being accompanied by another person when attending financial institutions or using ATM and the other person is reluctant to allow a conversation with the older person regarding transactions > being overcharged for repairs or services, overdrawn or depleted accounts.
Psychological	
<p>Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > pressuring, intimidating or bullying > name-calling, degrading or humiliating > threatening to harm the person, other people or pets > verbal abuse, insults or harsh commands > silencing and emotional blackmail > talking about not coping as a carer > repeatedly telling an older person they have dementia, are a burden or unwanted > treating the person like a child. 	<p>Signs/Indicators</p> <p>Behaviours may fluctuate, and may show improvement temporarily around some people, reverting back when abuser returns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > depression, sadness, tearfulness > confusion, disorientation > social isolation and withdrawal > feeling helpless and ashamed > insomnia, unexplained paranoia > fearfulness, intimidation, nervousness, anxiety > marked passivity, reluctance to make decisions, > changes in self-esteem, lack of confidence > anger, frustration > rocking behaviour > changes in behaviour around the abuser > apathy, listlessness.



Social	
<p>Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > restricting, stopping or discouraging social contact with others such as family or friends > preventing, stopping or restricting activities – either in the community, or residential aged care facility > withholding mail > prohibiting, preventing access or not disclosing phone calls > listening in to calls > restricting participation in religious or cultural practices. 	<p>Signs/Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > loss of interaction with others > sadness and grief of people not visiting > worried or anxious after a particular visit by specific person(s) > appears shamed > low self-esteem, or is very sad > withdrawn > passive (not wanting to participate; listless, uninvolved) > repeated unanswered phone messages.
Neglect	
<p>Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > lack of social, cultural, intellectual or physical stimulation > lack of nutrition, accommodation, clothing, medical or dental care > lack of safety precautions or supervision, injuries that have not been properly cared for > inappropriate medication management > repeated justifications or excuses for older person's absence or not returning messages. 	<p>Signs/Indicators</p> <p>Observations of neglect can be camouflaged by overly attentive behaviour in the company of others. Signs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > inadequate nutrition, accommodation, clothing, > inadequate medical or dental care > poor personal hygiene and skin integrity, exposure to unsafe, unhealthy, unsanitary conditions > malnourishment and unexplained weight loss > hypothermia or overheating > the person left alone or unattended for long periods.
Sexual	
<p>Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > physical actions - rape, sexual assault, indecent assault, sexual harassment > non-physical actions - obscene language or viewing obscene material or making obscene phone calls in the presence of the older person without their consent. 	<p>Signs/Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > physical – unexplained bruising, sexually transmitted diseases, infections, internal injuries, frequent incontinence, difficulty walking, human bite marks, scratches, bruises, pain on touching, choke marks on throat, burn marks, injury to face, neck, chest, abdomen, thighs or buttocks, trauma, including bleeding around the genitals, chest, rectum or mouth, torn or stained clothing > arousal – lack of awareness, drowsiness, vagueness, confusion > behavioural – fearfulness, agitation, disturbed sleep, withdrawal, lack of awareness > medical – similar to physical > carer/relative – overly protective or controlling, conflicting stories, attends appointments with older person, does not leave the older person unattended, requests behaviour that may be unusual.
Chemical	
<p>Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > inappropriate use (underuse or overuse) of prescribed medication > failure to provide or supervise medication > taking prescriptions or dispensed medications for addiction or financial gain > If the carer is a substance abuser, he/she may be giving drugs or alcohol to the older person. 	<p>Signs/Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > over-sedation, reduced physical or mental activity, grogginess or confusion > reduced or absent therapeutic response to prescribed treatment may be the result of under-medication, or failure to fill prescriptions > pills scattered about may be signs of inappropriate use of drugs, medications and/or alcohol > medical – reports of drug overdose, prescription medication missing or not taken, poor management of medical conditions, repeated accident or emergency department presentation, frequent falls.



For more information

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