

Because healthy relationships matter

What should I do if I suspect elder abuse?



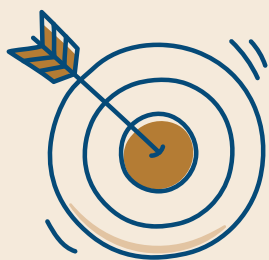
If you suspect an older person is being mistreated or exploited, it may be distressing and finding someone who understands the sensitive and confidential nature of the issue can help.

Below is information about identifying the risk factors and what to do if you suspect elder abuse is occurring.

Risk Factors

The following are possible risk factors for older people that can help identify situations where there is abuse:

- there is a carer who is experiencing high levels of stress, for example, health or financial pressures
- the older person is unable to stop or report abuse due to cognitive impairment or physical limitations
- there is isolation as a result of location, cultural or language barriers, or health complications
- a carer or older person is dealing with addiction
- a carer or older person is dependent on the other person for support, for example, financially, socially, or physically.



Identifying Abuse

Abuse can take many different forms and are not always so obvious to see. This includes physical, emotional, social, financial, neglect and sexual abuse.

Immediate Danger

If someone is in immediate danger, call 000. Remember that physical and sexual abuse are criminal acts and should be reported to the police.

Ask questions

Where it is appropriate, ask general questions about the person's wellbeing and their relationships. Blame and judgement are never helpful. Listen to what the older person says and be understanding.

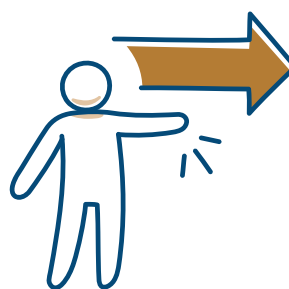
Understand that older people are often hesitant to cause trouble, as they may feel ashamed or worried about possible consequences.

Often, an older person feels protective of their adult children who may be mistreating or exploiting them. The adult child may have drug or alcohol dependency, mental health issues or difficult circumstances or challenges that are contributing to the abusive situation. An older person is more likely to accept help if they think their adult child's needs will be considered and addressed.

Keep a record of events.

Taking note of signs and symptoms may help those who investigate, to effectively address the abuse.

It is generally not advisable to confront the abuser without careful thought.



Seek Support

If the older person is willing to get support, help them contact a relevant organisation. Reassure the older person that there is help available, our Elder Abuse Prevention and Support Service supports older people to feel respected and safe through counselling, mediation, information and referrals.

It's important that an older person feels in control of the help-seeking process.

If they are unwilling to get help, provide them with emotional support and offer contact details of support services that they can use later. Keep checking in on them where possible.