

Care Partner Information

Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia Caregiving Tips

Protecting Against Abuse

What can you do to protect someone with dementia from abuse?

Know the Facts

People with dementia are at risk for abuse because their dementia may prevent them from reporting it or even knowing it is happening. Care partners can help protect them by knowing about the different kinds of abuse and their warning signs.

Always be alert for bruises or any unexplained changes in behavior. If you suspect that abuse might be happening, call 911. Or, to find out your state's Adult Protective Services phone number, call 1-800-677-1116.

Type of Abuse	What Is It?	Warning Signs
Physical	Force is used to threaten or cause pain.	Unexplained bruises, cuts, or marks.
Emotional	Spoken threats or insults.	Seems depressed, nervous, or afraid.
Sexual	Forced or unwanted sexual activity.	Fearful of a certain person or place; bruises/marks on breasts or genitals.
Financial	Stealing or using the person's money or property without permission.	Missing money or personal items; becomes isolated from friends/family.
Neglect	Not providing basic care or safety.	Bed sores; unusual weight loss; dirty hair, skin or clothes.
Self-Neglect	Person is unable to care for themselves.	Poor grooming; unsafe living conditions; not taking medicines correctly.

This Care Partner Information page is part of a series on caregiving tips. They are written to help family and community caregivers, direct care workers and promotoras care for someone with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. The information in the series offers general advice and does not distinguish between the different types of dementia.

Reduce Risk of Abuse in the Home

Caregiving is a stressful job. It can make you feel overwhelmed, depressed, tired and lonely. Many caregivers have their own health problems. Caregiving can be even harder if the person with dementia behaves badly, like yelling or trying to hit people.

Even the best caregivers can reach their limit and abuse a person with dementia. To reduce this risk, it is important for caregivers to take care of themselves.

How Caregivers Can Take Care of Themselves	
• Eat well	• Exercise regularly - every day is best
• Get routine health checks	• Schedule breaks for hobbies
• Spend time with friends and family	• Seek help from community resources

Reduce the Risk of Abuse in Formal Care Settings

Formal care settings are nursing homes, adult care homes, and assisted living. Before moving a person into a formal care setting, talk with other residents and their families to be sure the care is good. See if the staff gets training about abuse. Check on whether the staff is underpaid or has a high turn-over rate. After the person is living there, here are some other things to do:

What You Can Do To Prevent Abuse in a Formal Care Setting
• Visit often - at different times during the day and night.
• Check for any new bruises or injuries.
• Watch for any changes in behavior.
• Make a list a valuables - check often to be sure they are still there.
• Don't keep bank statements or other financial information at the care setting. They should be in a locked safe or with the family member who is the guardian.

- If you suspect abuse and feel the person with dementia is in danger - call 911
- To find your state's reporting agency go to Eldercare Locator at www.eldercare.gov or call 1-800-677-1116

Useful Websites

National Center on Elder Abuse: www.ncea.aoa.gov

National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse: www.preventelderabuse.org

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