

# Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Recognizing these warning signs of elder abuse can be a very effective tool in early intervention and prevention of further abuse.

## Physical Abuse

- Unexplained signs of injury such as bruises, welts, or scars, especially if they appear symmetrically on two sides of the body
- Broken bones, sprains, or dislocations
- Report of drug overdose or apparent failure to take medication regularly (a prescription has more remaining than it should)
- Broken eyeglasses or frames
- Signs of being restrained, such as rope marks on wrists
- Caregiver's refusal to allow the elder to be seen alone

In addition to the general signs above, indications of other types of abuse include:

## Emotional Abuse

- Threatening, belittling or controlling caregiver behavior that is witnessed
- Behavior from the elder that mimics dementia, such as rocking, sucking or mumbling to oneself

## Sexual Abuse

- Bruises around breasts or genitals
- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing



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## Neglect by Caregivers or Self-Neglect

- Unusual weight loss, malnutrition, dehydration
- Untreated physical problems, such as bed sores
- Unsanitary living conditions: dirt, bugs, soiled bedding and clothes
- Being left dirty or unbathed
- Unsuitable clothing or covering for the weather
- Unsafe living conditions (no heat or running water; faulty electrical wiring, other fire hazards)
- Desertion of the elder at a public place

## Financial Exploitation

- Significant withdrawals from the elder's accounts
- Sudden changes in the elder's financial condition
- Items or cash missing from the senior's household
- Suspicious changes in wills, power of attorney, titles, and policies
- Addition of names to the senior's signature card
- Unpaid bills or lack of medical care, although the elder has enough money to pay for them
- Financial activity the senior couldn't have done, such as an ATM withdrawal when the account holder is bedridden
- Unnecessary services, goods, or subscriptions

## Healthcare Fraud and Abuse

- Duplicate billings for the same medical service or device
- Evidence of overmedication or under-medication
- Evidence of inadequate care when bills are paid in full
- Problems with the care facility:
  - Poorly trained, poorly paid, or insufficient staff
  - Crowding
  - Inadequate responses to questions about care