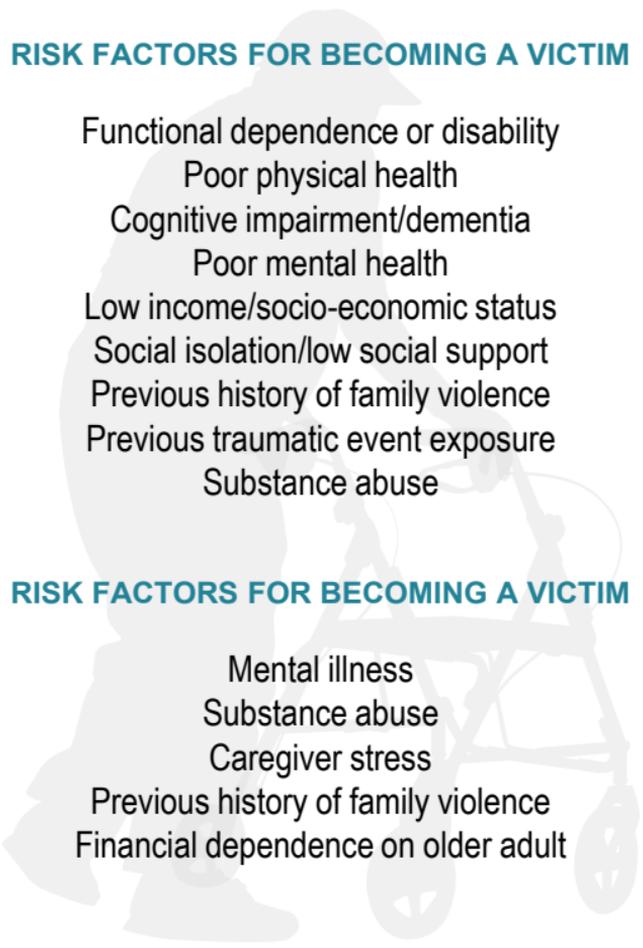


Risk Factors for Elder Abuse

RISK FACTORS FOR BECOMING A VICTIM



- Functional dependence or disability
- Poor physical health
- Cognitive impairment/dementia
- Poor mental health
- Low income/socio-economic status
- Social isolation/low social support
- Previous history of family violence
- Previous traumatic event exposure
- Substance abuse

RISK FACTORS FOR BECOMING A VICTIM

- Mental illness
- Substance abuse
- Caregiver stress
- Previous history of family violence
- Financial dependence on older adult

Identifying Elder Abuse

CONCERNS ABOUT THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Utilities not working correctly
(heating or cooling, water, electricity)

Fecal / urine odor

Empty refrigerator / no evidence of food

Vermin infestation

Extreme clutter / hoarding

Absence of smoke detector

Presence of fire hazard

Broken windows

Expired or unmarked medication bottles
or multiple bottles of same medication

Identifying Elder Abuse

CONCERNS ABOUT THE OLDER ADULT / CAREGIVER INTERACTION

Older adult and caregiver
provide conflicting accounts of events

Caregiver interrupts/answers for older adult

Caregiver appears unengaged/
inattentive in caring for the older adult

Caregiver appears frustrated, tired, angry,
or burdened by the older adult

Caregiver appears overwhelmed by the older adult

Caregiver appears to lack knowledge
of the patients care needs

Evidence that the caregiver and/or older adult
may be abusing alcohol or illicit drugs

CONCERNS FROM THE MEDICAL HISTORY

Unexplained injuries

Past history of frequent injuries

Elderly patient referred to as “accident prone”

Delay between onset of medical illness
or injury and seeking medical attention

Recurrent visits to the ED for similar injuries

Using multiple physicians and EDs for care
rather than one primary care physician
 (“doctor hopping or shopping”)

Noncompliance with medications,
appointments, or physician directions

PHYSICAL SIGNS SUSPICIOUS FOR POTENTIAL ELDER ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Bruising in atypical locations
 Patterned injuries
Wrist or ankle lesions or scars
 Burns
Multiple fractures or bruises
 of difference ages
Traumatic alopecia or
 scalp hematomas
Subconjunctival, vitreous, or
retinal ophthalmic hemorrhages
Intraoral soft tissue injuries

SEXUAL ABUSE

Genital, rectal, or oral trauma
Evidence of sexually-transmitted
diseases

NEGLECT

Cachexia/malnutrition
Dehydration
Pressure sores/decubitus ulcers
Poor body hygiene, unchanged diaper
Dirty, severely worn clothing
Elongated toenails
Poor oral hygiene

DIFFERENCES FROM FALL-PATTERN INJURIES*

Injuries to left side of face, peri-orbital area
Injuries to neck
Injuries to ears

*In preliminary research, these accidental injury patterns have been shown to be more common in victims of physical elder abuse than in accidental falls

QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE FOR POTENTIAL ELDER ABUSE

GENERAL

- Do you feel safe where you live?
- Are you afraid of anyone where you live?
- Who assists you if you need help?
- Who makes your meals?
- Who helps you take your medications?
- Who manages your checkbook?
- Do you have frequent arguments with your family or caregiver?
- What happens when you argue?

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Have you been hit, slapped, or kicked?
- Have you ever been locked in a room?
- Have you ever been tied down?
- Have you ever been forced to eat?

SEXUAL ABUSE

- Has anyone ever touched you sexually without your consent?

PSYCHOLOGICAL OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Do you feel alone?
- Are you yelled at where you live?
- Has your family or caregiver ever threatened to punish you or have you put in an institution?

NEGLECT

- Are you left alone often at home?
- Do you need to use hearing aids, glasses, dentures, or a walker or a cane? Are they readily accessible to you?
- Does your family or caregiver ever fail to help you when you need help?
- Do you have difficulty getting access to your medications?

FINANCIAL OR MATERIAL ABUSE

- Has anyone ever taken anything from you without asking?
- Have you been forced to sign a will, power of attorney, or any documents that you did not understand?
- Does your family or caregiver rely on you for housing or financial support?