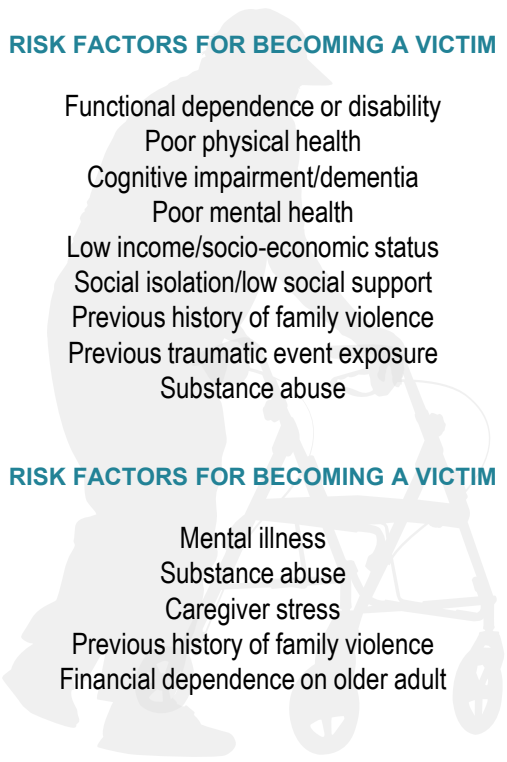


# Risk Factors for Elder Abuse

## 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?