



**NSW Ageing and
Disability Abuse Helpline**
1800 628 221 (Mon-Fri 9-5)

Relationships Australia

NEW SOUTH WALES

Reshaping lives, one relationship at a time.

Elder abuse

Elder abuse occurs when a person in a position of trust or responsibility exploits or mistreats an older person. Elder abuse can be a one-off incident, ongoing, or part of a history of family violence. The reasons for elder abuse can range from a lack of understanding of an older person's needs, to an intentional, aggressive act.



Types of elder abuse

Elder abuse can take many different forms. The most common forms of elder abuse are financial abuse and neglect.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse describes any deliberate act that causes pain for, injury to, or intimidation of, an older person. This includes all forms of physical assault, along with the use of restraint by physical or chemical methods.

Psychological/emotional abuse

Psychological or emotional abuse involves any action or threat that causes fear of violence, isolation, deprivation, humiliation or powerlessness. For example, treating the person like a child, preventing access to services, making threats (such as preventing them from seeing loved ones) or telling them they have dementia.

Sexual abuse

Any sexual contact, language or display of pornography without the older person's consent, or through coercion. For example, making obscene phone calls in the person's presence, inappropriate handling when undertaking personal care activities, or making the person perform a sexual act they don't want to.

Neglect

Neglect involves the failure of a carer to provide basic necessities such as food, shelter, or medical care, or preventing someone else from providing them.

Social abuse

Social abuse is forced isolation that prevents or restricts the older person's contact with friends, family or the community.

This could involve withholding or controlling mail or phone calls, preventing them from attending religious or cultural events, or taking over their home without consent. Social isolation often allows other forms of abuse to take place.

Financial abuse

This is the illegal, mismanagement or improper use of the older person's finances. This includes stealing money or possessions, controlling their finances without permission, threats or coercion to gain Power of Attorney or pressuring them for early inheritances.

When is elder abuse likely to occur?

Some of the possible risk factors for elder abuse include situations where:

- the carer 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
- the carer or older person is dealing with addiction
- the carer or older person is dependent on the other person for support, for example, financially, socially, or physically.

What should I do if I'm being exploited or mistreated?

The first priority is your safety. If you feel threatened or unsafe, **call 000**. The police can assist you in removing an abusive person from your home, or help you to find safe accommodation.

Finding someone to talk to and share your concerns with can be very helpful. This could be a trusted friend, family member or a trained person from a professional organisation.

If someone close to you is placing unwelcome restrictions on you, is emotionally mistreating you, or taking advantage of you financially, you may want to try to resolve things with them informally.

The Relationships Australia NSW Let's Talk Elder Mediation and Support Service could help to improve your situation.

You may feel protective of the person mistreating or exploiting you, particularly if they are your adult children. It is important to remember that you have a right to feel comfortable and safe, and that people, including adult children, can get help for their problems. They may not be aware of the impact of their behaviour.

What should I do if I suspect or witness elder abuse?

Elder abuse is distressing, and finding someone who understands the sensitive and confidential nature of the issue can help you in deciding what to do if you suspect an older person is being mistreated or exploited.

- If someone is in immediate danger, **call 000**.
- If you suspect Elder Abuse and want information, support and referrals - contact the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline.
- Remember that physical and sexual abuse are criminal acts. Other types of abuse are assessed on their particular circumstances.
- Where it's appropriate, ask general questions about the person's wellbeing and their relationships.
- Blame and judgment are never helpful. Listen to what the older person says and be understanding.
- Understand that older people may feel ashamed or worried about possible consequences.
- Keep a record of events.
- Reassure the older person that there is help available.
- If the older person is willing to get support, help them contact a relevant organisation. See right.

Where to get help.

Where to get help

The following organisations provide information and support for older people and concerned family and friends.



Call: 1800 628 221

NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline

Information, support and referrals for anyone who experiences, witnesses or suspects the abuse of an older person.



Call: 1300 364 277

Relationships Australia NSW

Call to talk about issues that concern you in a supportive and respectful environment.



Australian Government
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Call: 1800 550 552

Aged Care Complaints Commissioner

If there is concern around the care you or someone you know is receiving via an Australian Government-funded aged care provider.



Seniors Rights
Service

Call: 1800 424 079

NSW Seniors Rights Service

Legal information, advocacy and information about your rights in aged care.



Carers
Australia
NSW

Call: 1800 242 636

Carers NSW

Work with Carers NSW to improve their health, wellbeing, resilience and financial security.



Lifeline

Call: 13 11 14

Lifeline

Crisis support, referrals and suicide intervention. Call at any time of the day or week.

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