



Domestic Violence

Abuse is defined as a forceful, controlling behavior that makes the woman do what the abuser wants without regard for her rights, body or health. There are two types of abuse; physical and emotional (psychological). In most violent relationships, the abuse is of both types.

Physical assault includes hitting, slapping, beating, choking or attacking with a weapon. It can also be a sexual assault where there is abuse to the vulva or vaginal area and forced intercourse.

Emotional abuse includes forcing the woman to perform humiliating acts, threatening to harm children or pets or destroying valued possessions. This can be done by depriving the woman of money, food, sleep and isolating her from her family and friends.

Occasionally abuse can become worse during a pregnancy. The abuser will often attack the breasts or abdomen of a pregnant woman. Harm can come to the fetus with blows to the abdomen.

More than half the men who abuse their female partners also abuse their children. Children who witness family violence or are abused can be severely affected. The fear, anger and helplessness children have can lead to abdominal pain, diarrhea, headaches and nightmares. They often do poorly in school and can get into frequent fights. Children who are abused are likely to get into an abusive relationship as adults.

If a woman is being abused, help is available. The first step is to tell someone. This may be your family or a friend, your doctor, counselor or a clergy member. Often you will feel ashamed, but you must remember that no one deserves to be abused. Most areas have resource centers that can help you. There are many counselors who are specially trained to deal with domestic violence.

Sometimes women over age 65 are victims of abuse or domestic violence. This is called elder abuse. The abuse can be physical, mental, sexual or financial. Neglect may also occur. The abuser can be anyone, but is often a spouse or child. If you have been hurt or have had your possessions taken without your possession, you may be a victim of elder abuse. Seek help from someone you trust.

Where to turn to for help:

Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)

YWCA of Silicon Valley Rape Crisis Center (408) 287-3000 or (650) 493-7273

Community Solutions/South Conty Rape Crisis Center (408) 779-2115

