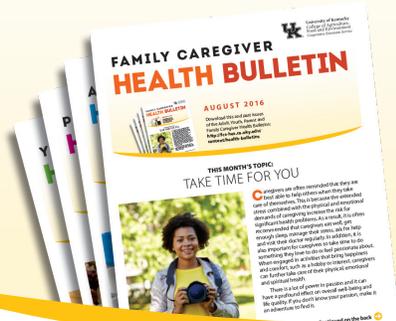




FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN

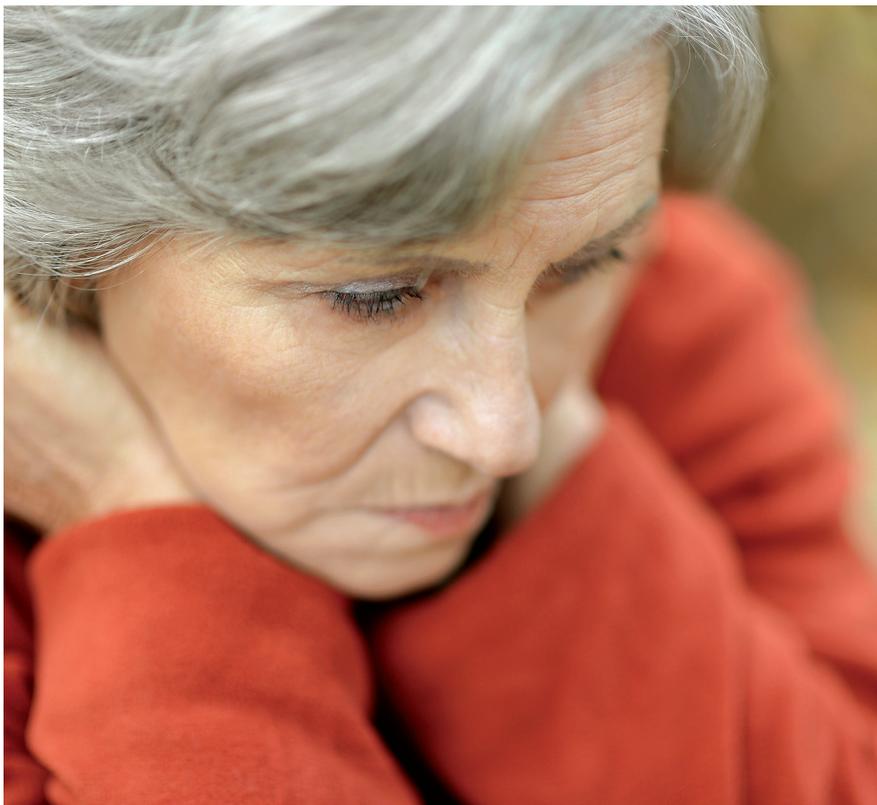


MARCH 2019

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

IDENTIFYING ELDER ABUSE



According to the National Institutes of Health, approximately one in 10 adults (60+ years) are abused, neglected or financially exploited (2019). Abuse can happen anywhere — at home, in a relative’s home, and even in a senior care facility or hospital.

Abusers can be anybody — men, women, family members and a variety of “trusted others” (Vandiviere, 2019). Abusers often take advantage of those older adults who are frail, vulnerable and cannot take care of themselves.

Because many signs and symptoms of abuse can present similarly to mental decline, it is common for abusers to use memory loss as a way to put doubt into people’s minds about the situation.

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Abuse comes in many forms: physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, financial, and abandonment. It is important to recognize the signs of abuse (NIH, 2019; Vandiviere, 2019).

- Depression
- Confusion
- Withdrawal
- Isolation from friends/family
- Unexplained bruises, burns, or scars
- Appears dirty/unbathed/disheveled
- Unsanitary or unsafe living conditions
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Underfed
- Dehydrated
- Malnutrition, unusual weight loss
- Undermedicated or overmedicated
- Neglecting medical care
- Bed sores (or other preventable conditions)
- Unexplained changes in banking/spending habits
- Wearing unsuitable clothing
- Being humiliated, intimidated or threatened (emotional abuse)
- Signs of trauma (e.g., rocking back and forth, unexplained changes in personality or behavior)
- Trouble sleeping

If you suspect elder abuse, it is appropriate to talk with the older adult and ask questions, but then you should alert professionals about your suspicions (Vandiviere, 2019). Kentucky is a mandatory reporting state, which means people who have regular contact with vulnerable people are required to report suspected abuse. If you suspect abuse, contact your local Adult Protective Services, Long-Term Care Ombudsman or the police (NIH, 2019). Always call 911 if it is an emergency. To report a suspected case to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, call 1-800-752-6200 (calls can be made anonymously), or contact the Attorney General's Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-877-ABUSE TIP (1-877-228-7384), or The Child/Adult Abuse Hotline at 1-877-597-2331.

REFERENCES

- NIH. (2019). Spotting the signs of elder abuse. Retrieved: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/infographics/spotting-signs-elder-abuse>
- Vandiviere, D. (2019). Learning the signs of elder abuse. *Kentuckydoc*, Winter (2019), 24.

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HEALTH BULLETIN**

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