

Domestic Violence

Protecting yourself and your children

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is abuse by a caregiver, a parent, a spouse or an intimate partner. It can take many forms. Here are some types of abuse: Physical abuse is the use of physical force. Sexual abuse means any forced sexual activity. Emotional abuse includes threats, constant criticism and put-downs. Controlling access to money and controlling activities are other abusive behaviors.

What should I know about domestic violence?

Violence against a partner or a child is a crime in all states. Each year, at least 2 million women are abused in this country. Abuse happens to people of all races, all ages, all incomes and all religions.

People who are hurt by their partners or parents do not cause the abuse. Alcohol and drugs do not cause abuse, although they can make the violence worse. Abuse can begin, continue and increase during pregnancy.

What can I do if I or my children are abused?

First, make sure you and your children are safe. Go to a safe place, such as the home of a friend or a relative, or an emergency shelter. Take your children with you. Call the police if you think you can't leave home safely or if you want to bring charges against your abuser.

If possible, take house keys, money and important papers with you. Do not use drugs or alcohol at this time, because you need to be alert in a crisis. The staff members at emergency shelters can help you file for a court order of protection.

What are other ways I can get help if I am abused?

Talk to your doctor, who can treat any medical problems, provide support and make referrals. Call an emergency shelter and ask about counseling and support groups for you and your children. Nurses, social workers and other health care professionals can also help you.



If you would like more information about domestic violence and the names and telephone numbers of shelters in your area, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233.



This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.

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