

# The Impact of **Elder Abuse** Among People with **Dementia**

Elderly abuse is a growing concern in the United States and older adults with **dementia** or **cognitive impairment** are often at an **increased risk of mistreatment**.

Elder abuse refers to an intentional or negligent act that causes **harm to an older adult**. This abuse may be **physical, sexual, emotional, or financial**.

**1 in 3 adults with dementia** experience more than one type of abuse.

Elders with dementia are more likely to experience difficulties in **memory, communication, and judgment** that make it harder for them to identify, prevent, and report mistreatment.

Rates of elder abuse of people with dementia are **substantially higher** when compared to rates of elder abuse reported for the general population of older adults.



As many as **62% of older adults** with dementia experience **emotional abuse**.



**1 in 4** of older adults with dementia experience **physical abuse**.



One study found that **60% of older adult** victims of sexual abuse have **cognitive impairment**.



**1 in 2** adults with **dementia** or **cognitive impairments** experience **some form of abuse** by others.

**47%**

One study found that **47% of people with dementia** experienced **some form of abuse and neglect** by their caregivers.

# KNOW THE **WARNING SIGNS** OF ELDER ABUSE



## Physical

- Bruises, cuts, open wounds, untreated injuries, or patterns of injury
- Medication overdose or underdose, or not receiving needed care for medical problems



## Sexual

- Bruises or cuts around the breasts or genital area
- Unexplained sexually transmitted disease or genital infection



## Emotional/Psychological

- Withdrawal from activities of daily life
- Emotional distress or agitation



## Financial

- Sudden changes in bank account or spending patterns
- Unexplained disappearance of funds or valuable possessions, or sudden transfer of assets



## Neglect

- Dehydration or malnutrition
- Untreated bed sores or poor personal hygiene



## Self-Neglect

- Refusal or failure to provide oneself with adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medication, and safe living conditions

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

The **LA County Adult Protective Services (APS)** program provides protections for adults against abuse. APS is here to help and is available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**. However, if you suspect a life-threatening situation, **call 911 first**. To report suspected abuse in communities, call the Elder Abuse Hotline at **1-877-477-3646** or **1-877-4R SENIORS**.

To report suspected abuse in long-term care facilities, call the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Hotline at **1-800-334-9473**. **All calls are confidential**.

### References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, June 2). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. Fast Facts: Preventing Elder Abuse. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/elderabuse/fastfact.html>
2. Alzheimer's Impact Movement. (March 2022). Elder Abuse of Individuals with Alzheimer's [Fact sheet]. <https://alzimpact.org/media/serve/id/5e94be2e283ff>
3. National Center on Elder Abuse. Research, Statistics, and Data. <https://ncea.acl.gov/What-We-Do/Research/Statistics-and-Data.aspx#signs>
4. Wigglesworth, A., Mosqueda, L., Mulnard, R., et al. (2010). Screening for Abuse and Neglect of People with Dementia. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, Volume 58, Issue 3, 493–500.
5. Dong, X. (2017). Elder self-neglect: research and practice. *Clinical interventions in aging*, 12, 949–54.

This tip sheet was developed with support from the California Department of Public Health's California Healthy Brain Initiative, through a partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.