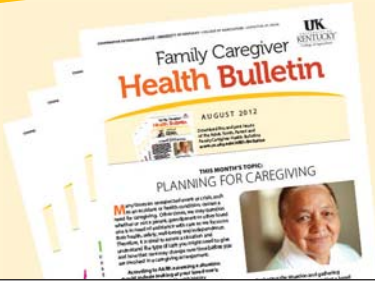


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



AUGUST 2013

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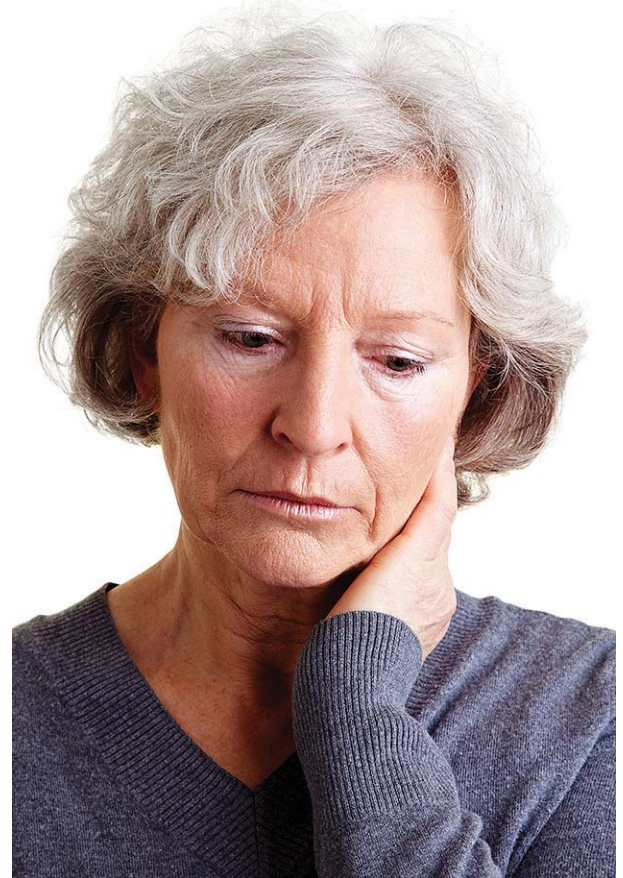
THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: ELDER ABUSE

Elder abuse refers to any intentional, unintentional or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. Abuse includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment and self-neglect. Every year, hundreds of thousands of older persons are abused, neglected and exploited. Those who fall victim to abuse are often older, frail and vulnerable. They cannot help themselves and depend on others to meet their most basic needs. Abusers of older adults are both women and men, and may be family members, friends or even "trusted others."

The National Institute on Aging and Administration on Aging recommends watching for these possible signs of abuse, neglect or mistreatment:

- Bruises, pressure marks, broken bones, abrasions and burns may be signs of abuse, neglect or mistreatment.
- Unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, sudden change in alertness or unusual depression may indicate emotional abuse.

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If you notice changes in an older adult's personality, behavior or habits, you should ask questions and report your suspicions.

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- Sudden financial losses may be the result of exploitation.
- Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene and unusual, unexplained weight loss may be signs of neglect.
- Behavior such as belittling, threats and other uses of power and control by spouses or other adults may signify verbal or emotional abuse.
- Strained or tense relationships and frequent arguments between a caregiver and the older person can suggest mistreatment, either by the caregiver or the person receiving the care.

Unfortunately, abuse takes place in all kinds of care environments—from one's own home to a nursing home or hospital. Sometimes other residents in a care facility cause abuse. Abuse, however, is often suffered in silence. If the older adult you care about is living in a long-term care facility, the facility must take steps to prevent AND report abuse. By being alert, you can help too. If you notice changes in an older adult's personality, behavior or habits, you should question what is going on and report your suspicions.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of older persons are abused, neglected and exploited. Those who fall victim to abuse are often older, frail and vulnerable.

If you suspect that someone is being abused, you should:

- Call 911 or the local police for immediate help if there is immediate danger.
- Contact the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services 24-hour toll free hotline (800) 752-6200 (calls can be made anonymously).
- If you suspect nursing home abuse, call your long-term care ombudsman.



If you have been the victim of abuse, exploitation or neglect, you are not alone. There are people who care and who can help.

- Tell your doctor, a friend or a family member you trust.
- Call the Eldercare Locator help line immediately. You can reach the Eldercare Locator by telephone at (800) 677-1116. Specially trained operators will refer you to a local agency that can help. The Eldercare Locator is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time.

For more information about elder abuse, contact the National Center on Elder Abuse, talk with your state or local long-term care ombudsmen, and contact the Department for Aging and Independent Living, Area Agency on Aging or the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center.

RESOURCE:

Administration on Aging (2009). What is Elder Abuse? National Institute on Aging (NIA). (2010). So Far Away. 20 Questions and Answers about Long-Distance Caregiving.

SOURCE:

Amy Hosier, Extension Specialist for Family Life, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture

Family Caregiver
Health Bulletin

Written by: Amy Hosier, Ph.D.
Extension Specialist for Family Life
Edited by: Connee Wheeler
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
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