

Elder Abuse

0800 -2000 - Free and available day and night

Elder Abuse

Fallen or pushed? Forgetful or neglected? Quiet or under pressure? Generous or robbed?

What is elder abuse?

Elder abuse is unacceptable behaviour towards the elderly by a person upon whom they are dependent, e.g. grabbing firmly when the older person is not listening, making unsolicited decisions for them or doing shopping using their household money. It often starts small, but there is a risk that it will go from bad to worse. An older person often does not indicate that they are dealing with this, out of fear, shame or because they are no longer able to do so. Elder abuse can involve physical, psychological or sexual abuse and neglect, but also financial exploitation. It is estimated that 1 in 20 older people are affected by elder abuse every year.

The perpetrators of elder abuse can be partners, children or grandchildren. However, overburdened informal caregivers or professional caregivers can also behave undesirably towards the elderly. Elder abuse does not always involve malicious intent. Sometimes it stems from impotence or too heavy a burden on the part of the person taking care of the older person. The care can be so stressful and often prolonged that the informal caregiver no longer sees lines being crossed. Conflicts can also give rise to unacceptable behaviour.

Action is important for both victim and perpetrator. Elder abuse does not stop on its own.

What can you do as a victim?

If things happen that don't seem normal or you are unsure about the way you are being treated, talk to someone you trust! It doesn't matter who—it could be your GP, the neighbour, a family member or another acquaintance. It is important to share your concerns so that you are no longer alone.

You can discuss whether something is wrong and whether something needs to change.

You can also always call Veilig Thuis. An employee will listen to your story attentively, answer your questions and give you advice. You can get everything off your chest, and together you can sum up the situation and discuss what needs to be done. The Veilig Thuis employee will also help you determine whether professional help is needed.

If you want, you can remain anonymous. You will receive advice and support even if you prefer not to mention your name.

What can you do as a bystander?

All kinds of changes in the behaviour, appearance or environment of the older person can indicate elder abuse, but other things can also cause these. Someone could be sad about a loss or lose weight because of an illness. If you see changes, you are probably not the only one who has noticed something. Talk to someone else who also knows the person in question. Together, you can determine whether something is indeed wrong and work out the best course of action.

Discuss your concerns with the older person as well; this isn't easy, because you often don't know what the situation is. They may also feel ashamed and want to hide the problem. Your suspicions may be incorrect, but it is important to talk to them. You can do this on your own or with the help of a professional. If there is evidence of abuse, you can discuss the next step or perhaps come up with a solution yourself.

Tips for discussing the abuse

- Make sure the older person feels at ease.
- Make sure you remain calm, do not panic them.
- Make sure you take it slow so and give them time to let everything sink in.
- Make sure that you do not judge too quickly.
- Make sure the older person also gets to talk and tell their story and give an opinion.
- If you are concerned and don't know what to do, you can always call Veilig Thuis. Even if you are unsure—especially if you are unsure.

Veilig Thuis

Veilig Thuis is there for anyone who is directly or indirectly affected by abuse. Veilig Thuis offers information, advice and assistance. An employee will answer your call and listen to your story attentively, answer your questions and give you advice. Together, you will discuss what needs to be done and what you can do. The Veilig Thuis employee can also help you determine whether professional help is needed. If you want, you can remain anonymous.