

Health Bulletin:

Domestic Violence and Abuse



#11 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

Do not live in fear.

If a spouse, partner, or anyone is hurting you, your children, or someone you know, *help is available.*

- Domestic violence is a *crime* that can result in serious injury or death.
- Most victims are women who are abused by male partners. But men can be victims, too.
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of serious injury to women. *About 1 in 3 women killed each year in New York City is killed by a spouse or partner.*
- Domestic violence occurs in all groups, regardless of race/ethnicity, income, age, education, religion, immigration status, or sexual orientation. *One in 5 families will experience domestic violence at some time.*
- Abusive behavior involves power and control. Physical violence often occurs after a pattern of psychological and emotional abuse is established.

Domestic Violence Is Still Violence
For Information and Help
24-Hours-a-Day
Call 1-800-621-HOPE
(1-800-621-4673)
Or Call 311 and Ask for the Hotline
EMERGENCIES CALL 911

What Is Domestic Violence?

- Domestic violence includes physical abuse of a person by a spouse or partner. It doesn't matter whether the couple is married, living together, dating, separated, gay or straight.
 - Physical abuse includes punching, slapping, hitting, kicking, choking, or biting. It also includes shoving, pushing, or holding a person down.
 - Using or threatening to use weapons (guns, knives, belts, heavy objects, etc.) is also domestic violence.
- Abuse can also be psychological, emotional, or sexual.
- *Acts of violence are against the law.*

Abuse Is About Power and Control

Emotional abuse often precedes physical violence. Here are some examples of how abusers can control and intimidate their partners. While some are not illegal, all are unhealthy. *No one deserves to be treated in any of these ways:*

Isolation

- Keeping you from seeing family or friends.
- Preventing you from going to work or school.
- Being overly protective, possessive, or jealous.
- Not letting you use the car or travel freely on your own.

Threats

- To hurt or kill you or your children, family, or friends.
- To take your children away.
- To report you to welfare or immigration authorities.
- To hurt himself or commit suicide.

Intimidation

- Insulting you, putting you down, calling you names.
- Interrupting you and not letting you speak.
- Humiliating you in front of other people.
- Stalking or harassing you, or making you think you're crazy.

Using children

- Calling you a bad mother or trying to turn your children against you.
- Using a child as a "go-between" to deliver nasty messages.
- Using custody, visitation, or family court orders to harass you.

Being cruel

- Denying you food, sleep, or medical care.
- Abusing or killing your pets.
- Destroying your clothes, property, photos, heirlooms, or other items you value.

Withholding support

- Taking your money, or making you account for everything you spend.
- Denying access to bank accounts and credit cards.

Sexual abuse

- Withholding sex or affection.
- Preventing you from using birth control or from using condoms to protect against sexually transmitted diseases.
- Forcing sex or sexual acts against your will. *This is rape, and rape is a crime, whether people are married or not.*



Abusive Behavior Often Occurs in Cycles

- Abuse may start slowly, with a few “minor” or isolated incidents.
- Over time, it may become more frequent and more violent.
- The abuser may cry, express remorse, apologize, and give gifts to try to “make up.” He often promises never to do it again.
- But in time, abuse is usually repeated.

Women Are Not the Only Victims

- Most domestic violence is committed by men against women. However, men can also abuse their male partners, and women can abuse either male or female partners.
- Children can also be the victims of domestic violence.
 - Men who abuse their partners are also likely to abuse children.
 - Children who live with abuse can be deeply and permanently hurt, even if it is not directed at them and even if they do not personally witness it.

No One Has a Right to Be Abusive

- Laws and social customs are different now than they used to be. Some behaviors that used to be considered okay are no longer acceptable, under any circumstances.
- Some cultures may permit things that are unacceptable or illegal here. Women have rights in New York City and in the United States that they may not have in other countries.

Can Abusers Change?

- Abusers need to learn to control anger and violent impulses.
- Behavioral change usually takes a long time and serious commitment. There is no guarantee of success. Many abusers drop out of counseling.
 - Abusers who stop drinking or using drugs do not necessarily stop abusive behavior.
 - Couples counseling often does not work. It can sometimes make things worse by implying shared blame for abusive behavior.

For Immediate, Non-Emergency Help Anytime Call the Domestic Violence Hotline

- You don't have to wait for an emergency. Call 1-800-621-HOPE (4673) or call 311 and ask for the Domestic Violence Hotline to get help with:
 - Counseling or other social services.
 - A court order of protection or an arrest warrant.
 - Shelters to get away from your abuser.
 - Leaving the relationship, temporarily or permanently.
- If you decide to leave, develop a safety plan. Abusers often become more violent when a partner leaves.
 - Make copies of important documents and keep them in a safe place.
 - Save money or secure financial assistance if needed.
 - Prepare a “go bag” with clothes, toiletries, medications, and other essential items.
 - If you can, open your own bank account and get a credit card in your name.
 - Have a safe place where you and your children can go.
- You can get help even if you are poor or undocumented.

More Information and Help

- Domestic Violence Hotline (24-hours-a-day): 1-800-621-HOPE (1-800-621-4673) or 311
- Violence Intervention Program (Spanish and English): 212-410-9080
- Arab-American Family Support Center: 718-643-8000
- New York Asian Women's Center: 212-732-5230 or 1-888-888-7702
- SAKHI for South Asian Women: 212-714-9153
- NYC Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project: 212-807-0197
- Help for abusers: 1-800-621-HOPE (4673) or 311

CALL 911 IF YOU OR ANYONE ELSE IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER

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New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
125 Worth Street, Room 342, CN 33
New York, N.Y. 10013

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner

Bureau of Communications

Sandra Mullin, Associate Commissioner
Drew Blakeman
Cortnie Lowe, M.F.A.
Kenneth Lo

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