

Signs of Nursing Home Neglect

The following are warning signs that could indicate the presence of nursing home neglect/abuse. Your family members may be afraid to tell you about instances of neglect/abuse out of fear or not wanting to burden you with this information. Worse yet, your family member may not even be able to talk with you due to their medical problems. If any of the following signs are present, you should take immediate action.

1. Unexplained bruises, cuts, burns, sprains, or fractures in various stages of healing
2. Bedsores or frozen joints
3. Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections; vaginal or anal bleeding; torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
4. Sudden changes in behavior
5. Staff refusing to allow visitors to see resident or delays in allowing visitors to see resident
6. Staff not allowing resident to be alone with visitor
7. Resident being kept in an over-medicated state
8. Loss of resident's possessions
9. Sudden large withdrawals from bank accounts or changes in banking practices
10. Abrupt changes in will or other financial documents



Forms of Elder Abuse

Physical Elder Abuse

- wounds, cuts, abrasions, burns
- bruises, welts, swelling
- broken bones
- sudden, unexplained weight loss
- unexplained injuries
- unnecessary restraints
- complaints

Mental Elder Abuse

- Fear, agitation, hesitancy
- depression, withdrawal
- sudden behavior changes
- unusual behavior patterns
- unable to communicate
- disorientation, confusion
- unwarranted isolation
- inappropriate comments by staff
- complaints

Elder Abuse Neglect

- bed sores (decubitus ulcers)
- unsanitary conditions
- malnutrition, dehydration
- odor of urine or feces
- unkept appearance
- poor personal hygiene
- untreated medical condition
- complaints

Exploitation/Financial Elder Abuse

- sudden/unexplained disposing of property
- missing/stolen money or property
- unexplained changes in handling financial affairs
- complaints

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Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the causes of nursing home neglect and abuse? Many instances of nursing home neglect and abuse can be caused by under qualified and inexperienced staff. Staff members that are unable to handle difficult nursing home situations may take out their frustrations on nursing home residents. Allowing instances of nursing home neglect and abuse to go unreported only allows the abuse to continue.

2. How prevalent is nursing home neglect? 1.6 million Americans reside in over 16,000 nursing homes across this country. A 1998 study conducted by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) concluded that more than half of the suspicious deaths studied in nursing homes were probably due to nursing home neglect, including malnutrition and dehydration. Unreported instances of abuse must also be taken under consideration when evaluating this statistic.

3. If I suspect nursing home neglect or abuse what can I do? If nursing home neglect is suspected the problem should be immediately brought to the nursing home's attention. The nursing home should act promptly and if the problem does not subside government assistance is available. Contacting your state attorney general's office to report nursing home neglect and abuse is an option, as well as retaining a private attorney.