

## Monitoring Abuse

### Elder Abuse

Home care providers and family need to be sensitive to signs of abuse or self neglect among persons with dementia because they may have difficulty speaking up about it or may not notice it. While one sign does not necessarily indicate abuse, some telltale signs that there could be a problem include the following.

- Bruises, pressure marks, broken bones, abrasions and burns may be an indication of physical abuse, neglect, or mistreatment.
- Unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, a sudden change in alertness and unexpected depression may be indicators of emotional abuse.
- Bruises around the breasts or genital area can occur from sexual abuse.
- Sudden changes in financial situations may be the result of exploitation.
- Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene and unusual weight loss are indicators of possible neglect.
- Behavior such as belittling, threats and other uses of power and control by spouses, family members or others are indicators of verbal or emotional abuse.
- Strained or tense relationships and frequent arguments between the caregiver and elderly person can be abusive.

### Self Neglect

Sometimes persons with dementia neglect their own care, which can lead to illness or injury. Self-neglect can include behaviors or consequences such as the following.

- Hoarding
- Failure to take medications or to get medical treatments when sick
- Poor hygiene and housekeeping
- Not wearing the right clothes for the weather
- Dehydration and malnourishment
- Eviction notices, failing to pay bills and utility shut offs.

Self-neglect is the reason behind most cases reported to governmental adult protective services programs. Some people can get help from community programs that can help them to live on their own; others with severe problems may need a legal guardian.

For more information, visit the National Center on Elder Abuse NCEA at <http://www.ncea.aoa.gov>.

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research.

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\*The information presented is adapted from the NCEA.