



## Violence against Women

Violence against women include homicide, intimate partner abuse, psychological abuse, dating violence, same-sex violence, elder abuse, sexual assault, date rape, acquaintance rape, marital rape, stranger rape and economic abuse.

### What are the types of violence against women?

Behaviors included in the broad category of violence against women include homicide, intimate partner abuse, psychological abuse, dating violence, same-sex violence, elder abuse, sexual assault, date rape, acquaintance rape, marital rape, stranger rape and economic abuse. The effects of this violence can negatively affect a woman's reproductive health, as well as other aspects of her physical and mental well-being. Long-term risks include chronic pain, physical disability, drug and alcohol abuse and depression. Women with a history of physical or sexual abuse also have an increased risk for unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and adverse pregnancy outcomes. The vast majority of violence against females is perpetrated by males.

### Are some women more at risk for physical assault than others?

Physical assault by someone known to the victim is a leading cause of injury to women. Nearly two million women are assaulted each year in the United States, and more than half of women will be physically assaulted during their lifetime. A large proportion of women (64 percent) reporting rape, physical assault and/or stalking, were victimized by a current or former partner.

Even pregnant women are not immune from physical violence inflicted by partners. Violence directed toward women by their partners during pregnancy affects as many as 324,000 annually.

### Does risk for violence against women change with age?

Violence against females can begin as child abuse and continue throughout the lifespan.

Elder abuse, defined as the mistreatment of any person older than age 60 years of age, is quite common. Older females are victimized more often than men. Although only 59 percent of the general population older than 60 are women, three of every four elder abuse victims are female. The most common victim of elder abuse is an older woman with a chronic illness or disability; the most common perpetrator is a spouse or another relative living with her. United States data shows that family members are the perpetrators of elder abuse 90 percent of the time. Abusers are adult children (47 percent), spouses (19 percent), other relatives (9 percent) and grandchildren (9 percent). Abusers are more likely to be male, even though the majority of caregivers to older adults are women. Elder abuse is quite clearly a family problem.

### How can I support someone who has been physically or sexually assaulted?

- **Do not blame the victim, assure her that the assault was not her fault**  
. Questions or comments such as, "How did you get yourself in that situation?," "Why were you there?," or "You should have known better," only blame the victim when the responsibility should be placed on the offender.
- **Listen.** Often the best way to be of help to the victim is to be there for them as they grieve and sort through what has happened.
- **Offer support**  
. Let the victim know that you are available to help them. She may feel better having you accompany her to the police department or clinic, or you may be able to help her cook a meal or take care of children while she obtains legal or medical counsel as she works through her feelings and decides what to do next.
- **Respect the victim's decision**  
. Be educated about the services available to victims of violence and refer victims to professionals. Keep in mind that the victim may not choose the option you might take if you were assaulted.