
Intimate Partner Abuse and Violence

Intimate partner abuse and violence occurs when one partner attacks the other with words, objects, hands, or fists. The abuse usually happens when one partner tries to control the other. The partners may be married, living together, or just dating. They may or may not have children. Drugs and alcohol may increase the risk of abuse, but they are not the cause of it. Drugs and alcohol are certainly no excuse for any form of abuse.

Intimate partner abuse is a common problem throughout our society. It is also sometimes referred to as domestic abuse and battering. Anyone can be a victim. It happens to people of all ages, ethnicity's, religions, sexual orientations, and economic groups.

One similarity does exist: Victims often feel shame, guilt, and anger. They are frequently too embarrassed to tell friends or family. It's also not unusual for victims to feel isolated from friends, family, and other support systems. They often feel helpless and believe that the abuse is their fault. No one, however, deserves to be abused.

Why do victims of domestic violence stay in such painful relationships? Many receive mixed messages of love and hate from their partners, creating so much confusion that they are unable to leave or make a decision. They might fear that ...

- their partner will beat them again or even kill them if they leave
- they must stay in the relationship for the sake of their children
- the police and the law will not support them
- no one will believe them
- they are the only person to ever be abused in this manner

These fears are not irrational or silly; some of them are often valid for very real reasons.

Unfortunately, abuse seldom stops without some kind of intervention. The abusing partner needs to be stopped and needs to get help. But first, the victim needs to know that there are places to seek help and safety.

If you are being abused, help is available. In an emergency, call 911 so the police can intervene. In many communities, the police will arrest the abuser so that you don't have to press charges on your own. You can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233), 24 hours a day. If you are calling from a TDD machine, dial 1-800-787-3224. The hotline can give you information about local resources. Kaiser Permanente can also help. If it's an emergency, go directly to the Emergency Room. You can also call the Psychiatry Department to learn about the various counseling services offered through the Psychiatry and Alcohol and Drug Dependency Departments.

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For more health information ...

- Connect to our Web site at **members.kp.org**. Here you'll find the Health Encyclopedia, which offers more in-depth information on this and many other topics.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at 1-800-332-7563. For TTY, call 1-800-777-9059.
- Visit your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.

If you have an emergency medical condition, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital.

An emergency medical condition is (1) a medical or psychiatric condition that manifests itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity (including severe pain) such that you could reasonably expect the absence of immediate medical attention to result in serious jeopardy to your health or serious impairment or dysfunction of your bodily functions or organs; or, (2) when you are in active labor and there isn't enough time for safe transfer to a Plan hospital before delivery, or if transfer poses a threat to your or your unborn child's health and safety.