



## Questions about Abuse to Routinely Ask Mature Adults

The American Medical Association recommends that doctors routinely ask mature adults about abuse, even if signs are absent. These questions are useful for any service provider working with older adults, or family members to ask when involved with vulnerable mature adults.

When asking direct questions, keep questions simple and ask in a nonjudgmental or non-threatening manner. This increases the likelihood that people will respond candidly.

If a vulnerable adult has a caregiver, interview both together and separately to detect disparities. Disparities can offer clues to the possibility of abuse. It is important to be diligent to prevent abuse from ever occurring in the first place. The following questions can be used to elicit information about potential elder abuse.

- **Physical abuse**
  - Are you afraid of anyone at home?
  - Have you been struck, slapped, or kicked?
  - Have you been tied down or locked in a room?
  - Have you been force-fed?
- **Psychological abuse**
  - Do you ever feel alone?
  - Have you been threatened with punishment, deprivation, or institutionalization?
  - Have you received "the silent treatment"?
  - Do you receive routine news or information?
  - What happens when you and your caregiver disagree?
- **Sexual abuse:** Has anyone touched you in a sexual way without permission?
- **Neglect**
  - Do you lack items such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, or false teeth?
  - Have you been left alone for long periods?
  - Is your home safe?
  - Has anyone failed to help you care for yourself when you needed assistance?

- **Financial abuse**

- Is money being stolen from you or used inappropriately?
- Have you been forced to sign a power of attorney, will, or another document against your wishes?
- Have you been forced to make purchases against your wishes?
- Does your caregiver depend on you for financial support?

**Follow-up questions (if abuse is identified)**

1. *How long has the abuse been occurring?*
2. *Is it an isolated incident?*
3. *Why do you think this happens?*
4. *When do you think the next episode will occur?*
5. *Is it safe for you to return home?*
6. *What would you like to see happen?*
7. *Have you ever received help for this problem before?*