



Women Abused in Intimate Relationships

Information Sheet

In 2006, a Statistics Canada report¹ stated that:

- 7 per cent of Canadian women, including 10 per cent of women in Alberta, reported being abused by their intimate partner between 1999 and 2004;
- 9 per cent of women under the age of 25 years reported sexual assault or criminal harassment between 1999 and 2004;
- 24 per cent of Aboriginal women reported abuse;
- 21 per cent of abused women were assaulted during pregnancy; and
- 1 in 5 homicides involves the killing of an intimate partner.

Get Help

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

For help in your community or for more information, please call the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line toll-free at **310-1818** or visit **www.familyviolence.alberta.ca**.

What is abuse?

Abuse is a pattern of controlling behaviour

- Abuse in intimate relationships happens when one partner develops a pattern of trying to control the other. The abusive partner uses many tactics to try to get his* way, to show that he has power over the woman and to stop her from leaving the relationship. The woman tries to change her behaviour to meet his demands, hoping the abuse will stop.
- Abusive behaviours are always a choice. It does not matter what the abuser's background or experience is, he must take responsibility for his actions. No one has the right to abuse someone else, and no one deserves to be abused.
- Women of all ages, all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and all income levels may be victims of abuse. Abuse happens in male-female and same-sex / LGBTQ** relationships. The abuse can result in physical, sexual, emotional and financial harm. Being subjected to abuse lowers a woman's sense of personal strength and value. Being threatened with or subjected to violence creates a pattern of ongoing fear.
- Abuse and violence in intimate relationships does not happen "just once." It happens over months and years, usually becoming more frequent and severe.

Abuse tactics

Abuse can take many forms. The most visible form may be PHYSICAL abuse, but less visible forms can be just as destructive. Examples of abuse tactics include:

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE TACTICS cause emotional pain and injury. The abuser uses emotional or mental "weapons" instead of physical assaults on the abused person — "weapons" like verbal, financial or spiritual abuse or controlling a person's activities.

PHYSICAL ABUSE TACTICS include a wide range of assaults by the abuser such as pushing, hitting, choking, hair-pulling or threatening to use a weapon. Their purpose is to cause pain or physical injury to the abused person. Physical abuse can also be locking or tying someone up, or preventing someone from getting medical help.

SEXUAL ABUSE TACTICS include physical attacks on breasts and/or genitals, and forced sexual activity. Sexual acts are abusive if the abused person finds them unsafe, unwanted, humiliating or painful.

INTIMIDATION TACTICS are any words or actions that the abusive partner uses to scare their partner. For example: destroying property, threatening, stalking or harassing.

* Abusers can be female or male. This publication deals with female victims, see "Men Abused by Women in Intimate Relationships" information sheet or booklet available at **www.familyviolence.alberta.ca**.

** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, trans-identified, two-spirited and queer identities



Nine things you can do if you are being abused

1. First, make sure you and any children are physically safe.
 - **If you are in immediate danger, call 911.**
 - Make a safety plan. If your partner has ever been violent, the violence could happen again at any time. You will need a safety plan so you can get to a safe place quickly if necessary. See “safety plan” suggestions at www.familyviolence.alberta.ca or call a women’s shelter or police-based Victim Services Unit for assistance.
2. Know that you are not responsible for the abuse. The abuse is the responsibility of the person who is abusive.
3. Understand that the abuse and violence will likely continue without intervention.
4. Tell someone you trust about the abuse. Secrecy gives abuse more power. Do not give up.
5. Find out more about abuse in relationships. You are not alone. Other women have had this experience and were eventually able to create new and healthy lives for themselves. Once you start looking for sources of help, you will meet people who understand your situation.
6. Find out what help is available in or near your community. Call the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line toll-free at **310-1818** or visit www.familyviolence.alberta.ca for more information.
7. Get professional help from a qualified counsellor.
8. Care for yourself. Anything you do to uplift your body, emotions, mind or spirit will help you to get through this difficult situation and create the life you want for yourself.
9. Spend time with healthy people. Even if they cannot help you directly, being with healthy people will remind you that most people have kind and rewarding relationships. You can too.

¹ Statistics Canada (2006, October). *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends 2006* (Catalogue No. 85-570-XIE). Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved from <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=85-570-XIE&lang=eng>