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# Cases and Stories of Abuse to Elderly in Nursing Homes

By Angela Atkinson, eHow Contributor

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Every family has dealt with an elderly relative who is no longer able to care for themselves independently, whether due to physical or mental incapacity. While some families are able to care

for elderly relatives in their homes, others must rely on nursing homes to take care of their loved ones. While there are countless reputable nursing homes in business today, increasing numbers of elderly patients and their families are reporting abuse by nursing home staff members.

## Types

Elder abuse is defined as any form of mistreatment (resulting in injury or loss) against an elderly person. There are several types of elder abuse. Physical abuse happens when someone uses force to cause bodily injury or pain and includes battery and assault. Improperly restraining or drugging an elderly person is also considered physical abuse. Sexual abuse occurs when an elderly person is raped or otherwise sexually assaulted without their consent. It can also happen when porn or other sexually explicit materials are shown to elders against their will, or when the elder is forced to watch sex acts between other people.

## Considerations

There are several other ways elders can be

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abused. For example, elder neglect (failure to attend to physical care needs) can be considered a form of abuse. This can happen intentionally, or because the caregiver is unaware of or in denial about the level of care the elder needs. Health care fraud is another form of elder abuse, in which the nursing home charges for services not rendered or overcharges for services performed. This can also happen when elders' meds are stolen or misreported to insurance companies.

## Warning

It's also important to keep a close eye on your elderly relative's finances during their stay in a nursing facility. Some corrupt nursing homes or employees attempt to financially exploit the elderly. They may steal checks, credit card numbers or even their entire identity for illegal purposes. Nursing home employees also have been known to ingratiate themselves with elderly residents to attempt to be put into their wills or to forge signatures on documents to obtain money, goods or services in the resident's name.

## Expert Insight

Jonathan Rosenfeld, an attorney who represents people injured by nursing homes, writes a blog detailing cases of nursing home abuse and neglect. In one story, he describes an 84 -year-old man who was beaten to death in his bed by a younger nursing home resident in his Texas nursing home. The younger resident was supposed to be confined to a specific area away from the older residents, but the nursing home staff failed to keep him contained. In another case, an 89-year-old woman was erroneously left alone by her nurse to eat her dinner in her room. When the nurse returned to check on the patient, she was choking on her food. The nurse failed to call for help, and the patient died. One more case involved a certified nurse's aide who beat an elderly patient with a clipboard and an incontinence pad and then pulled her hair



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and slapped her.

## Prevention/Solution

Certain factors may put the elderly at higher risk for abuse in nursing homes. These include the intensity of any dementia and the level of physical disability, whether or not the elder is physically aggressive and isolation that requires them to be alone with caregivers for any length of time. If your loved one is in nursing care, watch for signs of abuse and be sure to investigate anything that doesn't look or feel right to you. Some things to watch for include unexplained bruises, marks or other physical indications of abuse. Also be aware of the prescriptions your loved one is using, including dosage amounts. If your loved one is still able to communicate with you, talk with them about what to do if they're abused in any way.

## Resources

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[National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse](#)

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[Attorney Jonathan Rosenfeld's Nursing Homes Abuse Blog](#)

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[Signs and Symptoms of Nursing Home Abuse](#)

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