

# Domestic Violence

## Key Points

Defining domestic violence

Recognizing victims

How you can help

### What is domestic violence?

**Domestic violence comes in all shapes and sizes. Women are generally the more common victims of domestic violence, but men can also be victims.**

Domestic violence is not limited to heterosexual or homosexual relationships, or even sexual relationships at all. It happens in both wealthy and poor families, and in old and young families. It happens in marriage relationships and in unmarried relationships.

Put simply, domestic violence is an act of violence within a close domestic relationship. This may include violence between spouses or partners, parents and children (including adult children), siblings, or other extended family members.

The violent behaviour may be a one-off event, but more often it becomes a common occurrence, and in some situations can even become accepted behaviour. The violent behaviour may involve the use of a weapon, or it may not, or it may involve sexual violence. While it doesn't fit with our general understanding of violence, by some definitions, domestic violence also includes actions which inflict psychological harm, including the deprivation of a person's liberty (eg. by withholding finances).

Sadly, domestic violence is common. More than a quarter of women will experience domestic violence at some point in their lives, and one in twenty will have been a victim of domestic violence in the preceding year.

### Why does domestic violence happen?

Domestic violence happens for a range of reasons. A domestically violent person may feel unable to communicate or problem solve, and lashes out with violence. Another domestically violent person may feel that it is their right, or even responsibility, to keep someone in line, using violence if necessary. For others, domestic violence may be an extreme, and entirely inappropriate, form of parental discipline.

Whatever the cause, it is important to remember that a victim is a victim. Just as in cases of sexual assault, a person is not "asking for it" by anything they say or do. A victim who stays with an abusive partner is not "asking for it", just as someone who transgresses in their relationship is not "asking for it".

In short, there is never an acceptable excuse for domestic violence.

### How can I tell if someone is a victim of domestic violence?

The bottom line is that while there may be indicators of domestic violence for some people, for others there may not be, or, at least, no indicators you may be in a position to notice.



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**call:**  
**1800 337 068**

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For domestic violence in particular, indicators may include a victim:

- Frequently exhibiting injuries, with little by way of explanation
- Taking time off work or school, or missing social events, again with little by way of explanation
- Wearing clothing which may be intended to hide physical signs of violence (eg. wearing long sleeves in warm weather)

More generally, indicators of an abusive relationship, even if not violent by definition, may include a victim:

- Rarely going out except with their partner
- Receiving frequent phone calls from their partner checking in on what they are doing
- Having limited access to independent resources (eg. money, car, etc.)
- Being excessively anxious to please their partner
- Talking about their partner's temper or possessiveness

It is important to remember that these signs are not positive indicators of a domestic violence situation. They may, however, give you some indication that something may not be quite right.

## What can I do to help someone who I think might be a victim of domestic violence?

If you think someone might be a victim of domestic violence, talk to them about it. They may deny it, and this may even be the truth, but you're unlikely to cause any harm by asking. Tell the person what you've noticed that has made you concerned.

Most importantly, while the help and support you can provide will be invaluable, encourage the person to seek professional help. Encourage them to visit their GP or a counsellor, and if it's appropriate, offer to go along with them as a support. People who are in an abusive relationship have often been manipulated and controlled, and a professional is well placed to help them identify and challenge these bindings.

## What can I do if I'm a victim of domestic violence?

If you're a victim of domestic violence, remember first and foremost that you are just that, a victim. The violence or abuse is not your fault, and you do not deserve it. Speak with someone you trust about what is happening, and arrange an appointment with your GP or with a counsellor. Taking this first, confidential, step, can be a life changing experience.

### About Converge International

Operating since 1960, Converge International is the pioneer and a major Australian owned international provider of employee assisted services programs across all sectors of industry. To find out more about us, visit our website at [www.convergeinternational.com.au](http://www.convergeinternational.com.au) or call 1800 337 068