

**MAKING THE CONNECTION:
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
AND
PUBLIC HEALTH**



Local Resources

YWCA – Richmond:
643-0888

Safe Harbor – Henrico:
287-7877

Hanover Safe Place – Ashland:
752-2702

VCUMC Forensic Services – Richmond:
628-0623

**National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**

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**Recognition &
Prevention of
Domestic Violence:**

**A Guide for Health
Care Professionals**

Violence Against Women

- *is a women's health issue*
- *is a public health issue*
- *is a crime*

**Virginia Commonwealth University
Institute for Women's Health
National Center of Excellence**

**Virginia Department of Health
Center for Injury & Violence Prevention**

**Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence
Action Alliance**

Domestic Violence is associated with 8 out of 10 of the leading indicators for **Healthy People 2010:**
Tobacco Use,
Substance Abuse, Injury and Violence,
Mental Health,
Responsible Sexual Behavior,
Health Care Access, Immunization, and Obesity

Domestic and sexual violence is a health care problem of epidemic proportions. In addition to the immediate trauma caused by abuse, domestic violence contributes to a number of chronic health problems, including depression, alcohol and substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, and often limits the ability of women to manage other chronic illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) violence is a significant risk factor of morbidity and mortality in women. The effects on health, health behavior, and health prospects are profound.

The Link to Public Health – Get the Facts:

- Survivors of violence, compared with other women, more often rate their health care as poor or compromised.
- Domestic violence is more prevalent among women than diabetes, breast cancer, and cervical cancer and happens to women of all ages, races, and religions.
- Homicide is one of the leading causes of pregnancy associated injury deaths.
- A 2004 study found that women who experienced sexual violence were more likely than other women to have visited a health provider 8 or more times during the past year.
- The Centers for Disease Control found that the total direct health care costs of domestic violence were estimated at \$4.1 billion each year. Emerging research indicates that hospital-based interventions will reduce health care costs by at least 20 percent.
- Recent clinical studies have supported the effectiveness of a two-minute screening for early detection of abuse of pregnant women.
- In four different studies of survivors of abuse, up to 81% of the patients reported that they would like their healthcare providers to ask them privately about domestic violence.

A number of health professional organizations including the American Medical Association, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Psychological Association, American Nurses Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Association of Women's Health Obstetric & Neonatal Nurses and others have developed policy statements, position papers, and guidelines on this important health issue.

Definitions

Domestic violence and abuse, also called intimate partner violence, is a pattern of abusive behaviors, used by one individual with the intention of exerting power and control over another individual in the context of an intimate relationship and can include:

- * physical abuse
- * psychological or emotional abuse
- * sexual assault
- * isolation
- * controlling the partner's money, shelter, time, food, etc

For persons with disabilities, abuse can also take the form of neglect, such as denying appropriate personal or medical care.

Often, in opposite sex relationships the violent person is a husband, former husband, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend, but sometimes the abuser is female and the victim is male. Domestic and sexual violence can also be a very serious issue for individuals who are transgender, lesbian, gay, and/or bisexual. Societal stigma can amplify these individuals' victimization, placing them in even greater danger and making it more difficult to locate and access appropriate services.

Sexual violence is conduct of a sexual nature which is non-consensual, and is accomplished through threat, coercion, exploitation, deceit, force, physical, or mental incapacitation, and/or power of authority.

Sexual assault and abuse is any type of sexual activity that a person does not agree to, including:

- * inappropriate touching
- * vaginal, anal, or oral penetration
- * sexual intercourse without consent
- * rape / attempted rape
- * voyeurism
- * sexual harassment

It can happen in different situations: by a stranger or someone the victim knows; in an isolated place, on a date, or in the home.

Health Consequences of Domestic and Sexual Violence

Physical Health Effects:

Somatic and psychosomatic complaints
Physical injury
Chronic pain
Fibromyalgia
Chronic irritable bowel syndrome
Musculoskeletal complaints
Eating disorders
Hypertension
Smoking
Traumatic Brain Injury
Head, Neck or Dental Injury

Health Effects of Forced Sex:

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's)
HIV/AIDS
Pelvic pain, pelvic inflammatory disease
Urinary tract infections
Unintended pregnancy
Anal & vaginal tearing
Risk of homicide

Mental Health Effects:

Depression
Anxiety
Sleep disorders
Poor self esteem
Suicidality
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
Alcohol abuse/ Drug abuse
Eating Disorders

Research links a history of victimization to significant long term chronic health problems and health risk behaviors. Failure to identify and intervene compromises the quality of care provided.

Make a Difference - Ask the Question

Screen All Patients for Domestic Violence

RADAR: Action Steps for Health Care Providers

Routinely inquire about current/past violence
Ask Direct Questions
Document Findings
Assess safety
Review options and referrals

Talk to the patient alone in a safe, private environment. Ask simple direct questions such as:

- Because violence is so common in many peoples lives, I've begun to ask all my patients about it routinely
- Are you in a relationship with a person who physically hurts or threatens you?
- Did someone cause these injuries? Who?

Be supportive

- You are not alone
- It is not your fault
- You don't deserve to be hurt or hit

Assess safety

- Are you afraid to go home?
- Are there threats of suicide, homicide or are there weapons present?

Always

- Offer follow-up support
- Provide referrals

The best way to find out about domestic or sexual violence is to ask directly.

For more information and resources, visit
www.ProjectRadarVA.com

Resources

**Virginia
Family Violence & Sexual Assault
Hotline 1-800-838-8238**

Family Violence Prevention Fund
www.endabuse.org/health

Improving the health care response to domestic violence through public policy reform and health education and prevention efforts, training and education materials and resources.

**Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence
Action Alliance**
www.vsdvalliance.org

Serving as a leader in Virginia's response to sexual and domestic violence, education, advocacy, training, and resources. Statewide hotline.

**Virginia Department of Health – Center for
Violence & Injury Prevention**
www.vahealth.org/civp

Raising awareness and enhancing skills to prevent injury and violence in Virginia communities.

VDH Medical Outreach Project
www.projectradarva.com

Links to information, resources, training, and tools for health professionals

**Virginia Commonwealth University Institute
for Women's Health, Center of Excellence**
www.womenshealth.vcu.edu

Working to improve the health of women across the lifespan through health education, research, clinical care, outreach and leadership development..

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