

DOMESTIC ABUSE
(DOMESTIC VIOLENCE)

- **Intimate partner violence (IPV):** any form of physical, psychological, or sexual violence that is carried out by a current or former intimate partner who may or may not be a cohabitant [2]
- **Domestic violence:** a broad term for any form of violence committed by one member of a household against another, and can include IPV, older adult abuse, and child maltreatment

- During their lifetime, in the US: [4]
 - 47% of women and 44% of men experience IPV.
 - Approximately 30% of women and 25% of men experience severe physical IPV.

- It can occur between:
- Husband ↔ wife
- Boyfriend ↔ girlfriend
- Ex-partners
- Family members
- Caregivers
- ⚠️ **Key point:** Abuse is **not only physical**

Risk factor

- Risk factors include: ^{[3][5][6]}
- Evidence of discord in the relationship, e.g., hostility, conflict, verbal aggression
- Low socioeconomic status and/or level of education, unemployment
- History of abuse or exposure to IPV
- Substance misuse
- Mental or physical disabilities
- Mental health disorders, e.g., depression
- Younger age (ages 18-24)
- Pregnancy, especially unplanned
- Unmarried, divorced or separated relationship status
- Racial minority populations
- Sexual and gender minority populations, including:
 - Transgender individuals ^[7]
 - Same-sex couples ^[8]

TYPES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 1: Use of **force** causing injury or pain.
- **Examples:**
 - Hitting, slapping, punching
 - Kicking, choking, burning
 - Using weapons
 - Shaking (very dangerous in children)

- The presence of any of the following should prompt consideration of IPV. [5][10][11]

- **History**

- Hesitation to seek medical care
- Frequent visits to the emergency department
- Unexplained, unusual, and/or multiple injuries
- Unexplained somatic symptoms [5][9]
- Substance misuse
- Symptoms of mental health disorders (e.g., suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, PTSD)

- **Examination findings:** Specific injury patterns can indicate IPV.
 - Contusions, lacerations, and/or fractures of the head, neck, and face
 - Signs of strangulation
 - Signs of intentional injuries, such as injuries that are:
 - In a central location (e.g., breast or chest)
 - Bilateral (e.g., both arms)
 - Defensive (e.g., ulnar aspect of the forearm)
 - Signs of traumatic brain injury (from repeated head and neck trauma)

- **behaviors** ^[12]Fearful, avoidant, hostile behavior (e.g., avoiding eye contact)
- Partner insists on being present and speaking on the patient's behalf

Emotional / Psychological Abuse

- Damages **self-esteem and mental health.**
- **Examples:**
- Insults, humiliation
- Threats ("I'll kill you", "I'll take your kids")
- Isolation from family/friends
- Gaslighting ("You're crazy")

3. Sexual Abuse

- Any **non-consensual sexual act.**
- **Examples:**
- Rape (even in marriage)
- Forced sexual acts
- Sexual humiliation
- Reproductive coercion

4. Financial / Economic Abuse

- controlling **money and resources**.
- **Examples:**
- Taking victim's salary
- Preventing work or education
- Giving "allowance"
- Creating debt in victim's name

5. Digital / Technological Abuse

- **Examples:**

- Tracking phone location
- Reading messages
- Social media harassment
- Posting private images

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

Women (most common)

- Men (often underreported)
- Children (direct or witnessing abuse)
- Elderly
- Disabled individuals

• **Anyone can be abused regardless of:**

• Age

• Education

• Social class

• Culture

RISK FACTORS

- **Abuser-related:**

- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Personality disorders
- Jealousy, control issues
- History of violence

- **◆ Victim-related:**

- Pregnancy
- Financial dependence
- Social isolation
- Previous abuse history

- **Physical Signs:**

- Injuries at different healing stages
- Bruises in hidden areas (thighs, back)
- Frequent ER visits

- **▶ Behavioral Signs:**

- Fearful, anxious
- Avoids eye contact
- Partner answers for patient

- **▶ Children:**

- Developmental delay
- Nightmares
- Aggression or withdrawal

CONSEQUENCES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

- **Physical:**

- Fractures
- Chronic pain
- Head injury
- Death

- **Psychological:**

- Depression

- Anxiety

- PTSD

- Suicide

- **Social:**

- Homelessness

- Poor work performance

- Intergenerational violence

SCREENING & DIAGNOSIS

- **Screening Questions (Ask PRIVATELY) :**

- "Do you feel safe at home?"
- "Has anyone hurt you?"
- "Are you afraid of your partner?"
- ⚠️ Never ask in front of partner.

- **◆ Tools :**

- HITS questionnaire
- Abuse Assessment Screen (AAS)

**Table 1: Cut Scores for Each of the Verbal HITS items*
From the Original Research by Sherin et al¹⁵**

Item	Cut Score	Sensitivity (%)	Specificity (%)
How often does your partner . . .			
Physically hurt you?	1.5	100	93
Insult you or talk down to you?	2.5	96	73
Threaten you with harm?	1.5	88	91
Scream or curse at you?	3.5	82	91

* Responses to the verbal HITS are scored in the following way: 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Fairly Often, 5=Frequently. For each item, $P < .01275$.

“Since abuse and violence are so common in women’s lives, we have begun asking these questions of all women who come to _____ (name of the clinic).”

1	Are you currently living with your partner?
2	In the last 30 days, have you felt sad, anxious because of problems at home?
3	In the last 30 days, have you had sleeping problems?
4	In the last 30 days, have you felt lonely or not supported at home?
5	Regarding your relationship with your partner, please indicate if any of the following items apply to you: Does your partner shout at you constantly? Does your partner humiliate you? Has your partner ever pushed you? Do you have to ask permission from your partner to go see your friends? Do you have to ask permission from your partner to go see your family? Do you sometimes have sexual relations with your partner without consenting? Has your partner ever said he would leave you if you did not get pregnant? In the last 12 months, has your partner told you not to use any birth control (such as pills, shot, ring, etc.)?
6	In the last 30 days, have you ever felt harmed emotionally or psychologically by your partner or another person important to you? (For example, constant insults, humiliation at home or in public, destruction of objects you felt close to, ridicule, rejection, manipulation, threats, isolation from friends or family members, etc.)*
7	Does your partner check on you at all times and tries to control most of your activities?
8	Are you afraid of your partner causing you harm?
9	Has your partner caused you physical harm? (Examples: hitting, burning or kicking you?)
10	Have you ever been forced by your partner to have sexual contact or intercourse?

MANAGEMENT & MANAGEMENT

- **Immediate Management:**
- Ensure **patient safety**
- Treat injuries
- Document findings carefully
- Assess risk of homicide
- **Support:**
- Listen without judgment
- Validate feelings
- Provide emergency contacts
- **Referral:**
- Social services
- Shelters
- Legal aid
- Mental health support