



## RED FLAGS SUGGESTIVE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE



Typically the victims of domestic violence are female, but health care providers should also recognize that males could be abuse victims also. Men presenting under any of the following circumstances also should be screened and evaluated for partner violence.

The best way to find out about domestic violence is to ask about it directly, through routine screening. However, presence of the following high risk factors, injuries, or conditions should raise your index of suspicion for abuse.

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### GENERAL PRESENTATIONS

- **An injury inconsistent with the history.** The most common history given by abused women: *“I fell”*.
- **A changing history** or vague description of the cause.
- **A delay in seeking care.** The batterer cancels the appointment or the victim avoids going to the appointment to avoid detection.
- **A string of canceled appointments**, especially if canceled by a male partner.
- **An untreated medical condition.** This may be due to the batterer preventing the victim from getting care or no transportation because the batterer takes the car.
- **A partner who insists on staying close** and answering questions directed toward the patient.
- **Downplaying injuries.**

### TRAUMA PRESENTATIONS

- **Multiple visits to the emergency department**
- **Inconsistent history**
- **Injures in various stages of healing**
- **Central body injuries** (scalp, head, chest, abdomen)
- **Multiple injuries**
- **Bilateral injures** (accidental injuries tend to be unilateral)
- **Genital/rectal injures** (rarely occur accidentally except in cases of straddling injuries)
- **Defensive injuries to the ulnar aspects of the arm**
- **Ocular injures** (blow-out fractures, broken glasses)
- **Strangulation injures**
- **Pattern injures** (baseball bat, shoe, etc)
- **Physical injures during pregnancy, especially on breast and abdomen**

## GYNECOLOGIC PRESENTATIONS

- STDs including HIV
- Chronic Pelvic Pain
- Sexual Dysfunction
- Dyspareunia
- Recurrent vaginal infections

## OBSTETRICAL PRESENTATIONS

- Unintended pregnancy
- Late prenatal care, missed appointments
- Substance use and abuse
- Multiple, repeated complaints, poor weight gain and nutrition
- Preterm labor
- Fetal injury and death
- Maternal injury
- **Pregnancy:** Abuse will often begin during pregnancy. Due to the high prevalence of domestic abuse during pregnancy **all pregnant women should be screened routinely throughout the pregnancy.** Late or sporadic prenatal care is more prevalent in abused women, especially abused teens.

## PSYCHIATRIC PRESENTATIONS

- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Suicide attempts
- Eating disorders
- Drug and or alcohol use/ abuse
- Anxiety and panic disorders

## SOMATIZATION OR NON-SPECIFIC MEDICAL COMPLAINTS

- Chronic headaches
- Chronic vague abdominal pain
- Palpitations
- Hyperventilation
- Weight loss/gain
- Fatigue
- Insomnia