



BE SAFE: Prevent Intimate Partner Violence



What is intimate partner violence?

Intimate partner violence (IPV), also called domestic violence, is common among Veterans. IPV is the most common cause of injury to women in the U.S. IPV is defined as actual or threatened emotional, physical, or sexual abuse or stalking behaviors by an intimate partner. It may happen once or be a pattern of events that gets worse over time. Intimate partner violence may occur with a current or former boyfriend, girlfriend, or spouse of any sex or gender. Partners do not have to have sex or live in the same place. Both women and men can experience IPV.

How do I know if I am at risk for experiencing IPV?

- You were abused as a child or saw your parents be violent with each other
- You have experienced violence and/or aggression in intimate relationships before
- You have mental health issues such as substance use, posttraumatic stress, depression, and/or brain injury
- You have money and/or job difficulties
- You have trouble in your current intimate relationship
- You don't have any or many friends
- You are 18–24 years of age
- You are pregnant or recently gave birth
- Your partner has hurt a pet on purpose
- You recently left a partner who was hurting you emotionally or physically

What may happen if I experience IPV?

- Suffering physical injury including death, brain injury, broken bones, bruises, cuts, and burns
- Having health problems (such as sexually transmitted infections; problems from stress; problems with your heart, stomach, or digestive system)
- Trouble getting pregnant or carrying a baby to term
- Eating too much or too little
- Ignoring your health needs
- Starting or increasing drug, tobacco, or alcohol use
- Feeling depressed or anxious, thinking about hurting yourself

A Better Way to
LIVE

*Talk with your
health care team
about your goals.*



- Having posttraumatic stress
- Having housing, money, and/or job problems
- Being stopped by your partner from getting the help you need
- Not being allowed by your partner to see your family and friends as much as you would like

How do I prevent myself from experiencing IPV?

- Get treatment for mental health and substance use issues, including posttraumatic stress and depression
- Ask a VA provider for a referral for job and/or money support if you need it
- Learn about healthy relationships through therapy or other programs
- Strengthen your relationships with family and friends
- Engage in positive social interactions and make positive new connections
- Strengthen your relationships with family and friends

What do I do if someone I love is hurting me?

- If you are in immediate danger:
 - Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline:
 - 1-800-799 SAFE (7233); 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)
 - Providers and clients can call for help with safety planning, housing options, and local referrals. Help is available in more than 140 languages
 - Hotline is available to people of all genders and in same-sex or opposite-sex relationships
 - Call 911 or go to your nearest hospital emergency room
 - Seek help and support from your providers or a local domestic violence agency if you have experienced any of the following, as they are warning signs of potential serious injury and/or death:
 - Partner attempts to choke or strangle you
 - Abuse is happening more often and/or is getting worse
 - You recently left an abusive partner
- Reach out for help
 - Talk to a trusted family member, friend, or spiritual leader
 - Contact a local domestic violence agency
 - Contact your local VA

If you have questions about how to make healthy living changes, please talk with your health care team.

FOR THE MOST CURRENT INFORMATION AND OTHER RESOURCES:

- VHA Women's Health Services—Intimate Partner Violence: www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/outreachmaterials/abuseandviolence/intimatepartnerviolence.asp
- VHA National Center for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention: www.prevention.va.gov. Go to the *Healthy Living* tab and choose "Be Safe"