



Violence Against Women

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

For many years, ACOG has joined other local, state, and national organizations in sponsoring October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month to raise awareness about this public health epidemic. Activities often include campaigns encouraging domestic violence awareness in the workplace and in health care settings, charity shopping days and national days of recognition. Call your local domestic violence shelter to find out how you can participate this year.

Additionally, ACOG has participated in Health Cares about Domestic Violence Day, sponsored by the Family Violence Prevention Fund. ACOG encourages its Fellows to screen all patients for violence at regular, ongoing intervals. This is a good day to begin to do so if you aren't already including questions about violence in your health assessments. The Family Violence Prevention Fund website includes information about screening for your information.

ACOG renews its recommendations that

all health care providers conduct screening of all patients at regular intervals. Screening should occur

- at routine annual examinations
- at preconceptional visits
- once per trimester for pregnant patients
- at post partum examinations

Screening must be conducted in private and can be done quickly by using direct questions. [Click here to view ACOG screening tool](#). The use of relatives (including children) as translators should be avoided. Responses should be charted and appropriate referrals made as warranted. Safety planning should be conducted following disclosure. [Click here for Safety Plan](#). More information on domestic violence can be found in ACOG documents Educational Bulletin #257 entitled "Domestic Violence" and Committee Opinion #200 entitled "Mandatory Reporting of Domestic



¿Es Usted Víctima de Maltratos?

Help! ¡Ayuda!

Screening Tools

State Coalitions

Stay Alert! Stay Safe!

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ACOG's Efforts

National Resources

Selected Bibliography

Related Sites

Are you Being Abused?

VAW Home

ACOG Home

Contact:

Jan Chaplin, RN, MPH
 Director
 Div of Women's Health Issues
 Judy Brenner
 Associate



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Screening Tools--Domestic Violence

ACOG recommends that physicians screen ALL patients for intimate partner violence.

For women who are not pregnant, screening should occur:

- at routine ob-gyn visits
- family planning visits
- preconception visits.

For women who are pregnant, screening should occur at various times over the course of the pregnancy because some women do not disclose abuse the first time they are asked and abuse may begin later in pregnancy.

Screening should occur:

- at the first prenatal visit
- at least once per trimester, and
- at the postpartum checkup.

Domestic violence screening can be conducted by making the following statement and asking these three simple questions.

"Because violence is so common in many women's lives and because there is help available for women being abused, I now ask every patient about domestic violence:

1. Within the past year – or since you have been pregnant – have you been hit, slapped, kicked or otherwise physically hurt by someone?
2. Are you in a relationship with a person who threatens or physically hurts you?



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Leaving the Violence

If You Are Threatened Or Assaulted and Need Emergency Help, Call 911.

National 24-hour Toll-Free Hotline Numbers:
1-800-799-SAFE (7233) and 1-800-787-3224 (TDD)

Family Violence Affects Us All

Millions of women are physically, sexually, or emotionally abused every year by someone they know and love - their husband or partner. *Any* woman may be abused. It happens to women of all ages, races, religions, all income and educational levels, and all sexual orientations.

Abuse is *never* acceptable. Women don't "ask for it" and it's not caused by alcohol, drugs, financial pressure, depression, or jealousy. Abuse can begin - or get worse - when you're pregnant.

You can take the first step towards ending abuse by asking your doctor or nurse how to get help.

Planning For Your Safety

Making a decision to leave an abusive relationship can be very difficult. It may take time for you to feel ready. Call a women's shelter; someone there can help with a safety plan - *you do not have to give anyone your name.* If you are ready to leave:

Pack a bag *in advance* and leave it at a friend's or neighbor's house. Include cash or credit cards and extra clothes for you and your children. Take a favorite toy or plaything.

Hide an extra set of car and house keys outside of your house in case you have to leave quickly.



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violence@acog.org

Take important papers, such as:

- birth certificates for you and your children
- health insurance cards and medicine
- a deed or lease to your house or apartment
- a checkbook and extra checks
- your social security number or green card/work permit
- any court papers or orders
- a driver's license or photo ID
- pay stubs

Talking to your doctor about abuse isn't easy, but it can help. When you're ready, we're here to listen.



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