

Your Health

This leaflet gives information about how domestic abuse can affect your health and how you feel physically and emotionally. It also tells you about services in East Lothian which can help.

Health effects


Being abused physically, sexually or emotionally can affect your physical, sexual and mental health. You may have injuries or other physical or sexual health problems.

Many women feel stressed or depressed. This is a 'normal' reaction to what is happening.

These effects will not last forever. It is important to look after yourself and get help. There are many services in East Lothian which can help you. They are experienced in helping women who are abused.

Treatment for injuries

If you have been injured, try to get medical help as soon as you can. If it's an emergency, go to Accident and Emergency at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Little France. You can also go to your GP or the minor injuries clinic at the Western General Hospital, 9am to 9pm. If your teeth have been damaged, go to your dentist. If you are not registered with a dentist you can go to Chalmers Dental Centre, 3 Chalmers Street, Edinburgh (weekdays) or phone Lothian Dental Advice Line on 0131 536 4800 (evenings and weekends).



"MY GP suggested free counselling. The first time was really daunting but i'm so glad i went. It's really beneficial."

Physical health

Domestic abuse can cause or worsen many physical problems including skin disorders, migraine, digestive problems, asthma and many more. It is linked to miscarriages and complications with pregnancy and birth. So, it is important to get yourself checked up and treated to prevent long-term ill health.

If you are worried about domestic abuse and/or your health, speak to your GP or another health worker such as your midwife or health visitor. Your GP will refer you to a specialist service if you need this.

Sexual health

Domestic abuse can include rape or sexual assault which can cause gynaecological and sexual health problems. You can go to a GUM or family planning clinic without going through your GP (see leaflet 12 for sources of help and support) for testing, treatment and to talk to someone in confidence.

Mental health

Domestic abuse can affect your mental health. You may be overwhelmed with feelings of sadness and anger. You may feel depressed and anxious. You may find it difficult to sleep or to concentrate. Domestic abuse is also linked to eating disorders, self-harm and attempted suicide. Your partner may also tell you that you are 'mad'. It may be hard for you not to believe the things that he says and this can make you feel even worse.

If you are worried about how you are feeling or need help to cope with the stress you may be under, it may help to talk to a counsellor. Your GP can put you in touch with Eclipse. This is a free counselling service for people in East Lothian. Your GP can also tell you about other services. See also sources of help and support in leaflet 12.

Drugs and alcohol

Many women try to cope with the abuse by drinking alcohol or taking prescription and non-prescription drugs. These can lead to other health problems and difficulties such as debt. You can get support to find other ways of coping with stress and abuse. Your GP can tell you about help available. Leaflet 12 on sources of help and support has details of local support organisations.

Children's health

The abuse can also affect children's physical and mental health. They may show signs of stress such as bedwetting, nightmares, poor concentration, bad behaviour or depression.

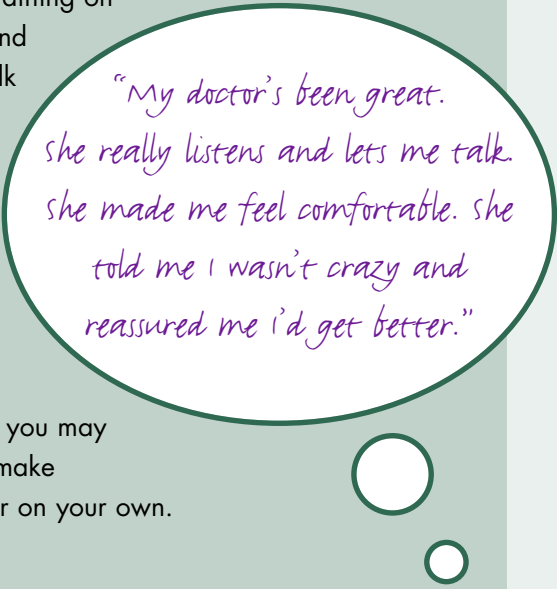
If you are concerned about a child's physical and emotional health, speak to your child's GP or health visitor. They will link you into other services in East Lothian.

Getting help

You can tell any health worker such as your GP, health visitor, district nurse, midwife or practice nurse about the abuse. Many health workers in East Lothian have had training on domestic abuse, and they understand that it may be difficult for you to talk about it.

You can speak to a health worker in confidence. They will not tell anyone else what you say unless they think that a child is at risk of harm.

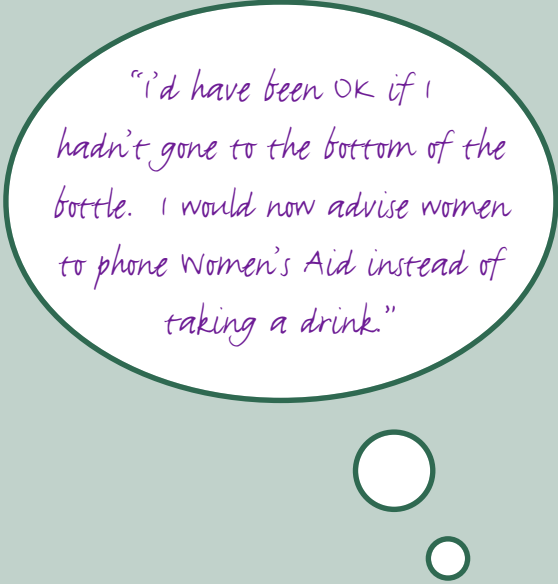
If your abusive partner always accompanies you to appointments, you may need to go at a particular time or make some excuse to see a health worker on your own.



"My doctor's been great. she really listens and lets me talk. she made me feel comfortable. she told me i wasn't crazy and reassured me i'd get better."

You can ask to have injuries photographed and documented in case you ever need this for evidence in the future.

You can phone NHS 24 any time for advice or help on 08454 242424 or see online at www.nhs24.com



"I'd have been OK if I hadn't gone to the bottom of the bottle. I would now advise women to phone Women's Aid instead of taking a drink."

Phone the Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline in confidence on 0800 027 1234 any time, day or night.

Domestic abuse: there's no excuse

2nd edition December 2009