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# ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN

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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**D**omestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women 15–45 years of age. More women are injured by domestic violence than rape, muggings, and automobile accidents combined. Seventy-five percent of women murdered by their abuser were killed as they attempted to leave or had already left the relationship. Although these numbers may be alarming, few women (8 percent) tell their physician that they have been abused by their partner or spouse. It has also been reported that only about 10 percent of primary care providers screen for domestic violence.

**Why don't they just leave**

Domestic violence victims may not report abuse to police or seek help because they may be:

- Intimidated by the abuser or the protection and service systems
- Afraid of the abuser



- Embarrassed
- Exhausted from the efforts to survive and fend off more violence
- Depressed
- Isolated; cannot get to services or no services available locally
- Financially dependent on the abuser

The more often abuse occurs and the less the victim takes action to address the abuse, the more often nega-

tive self-talk messages are repeated. The victim begins to believe the messages and accepts the abuse.

The time is now to stop and consider the rate and impact of this life-threatening problem. It is also a time to think about what we can do as friends, neighbors, and communities to erase this problem.

Numbers can be misleading and fail to show the real human impact of violence. Not all victims of domestic violence are going to be counted in data. They will not show

up in police records, court records, domestic violence and adult protection reports, hospital admission and discharge records, or records that indicate the cause of death. Because of the sensitive nature and implications of the problem, some victims will not be come forward with information. We will probably never know how often domestic violence occurs.

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### How can I reduce domestic violence in my community?

***Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women 15–45 years of age. More women are injured by domestic violence than rape, muggings, and automobile accidents combined.***

- Educate your family, friends, and neighbors about domestic violence.
  - If you know someone who is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.
  - If you know someone who is being abused, offer your help and understanding.
  - Let them know they are not alone.
  - Refuse to allow violent behavior in your own family.
  - Teach your own children to respect and honor relationships.
  - Report suspected child abuse and neglect.
- Children who grow up being abused are more likely to continue violence in their own families.
  - Discourage the abuse of drugs and alcohol. Both are major contributing factors to family violence.
  - Practice anger management and teach your children the pitfalls of uncontrolled anger.
  - Learn how to contact the domestic violence services available and accessible in your community.

### The evidence speaks when the victims cannot

The National Institute for Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that nationally, “women make nearly 700,000 visits to the health care system per year as a result of injury due to physical assault.”

The KY Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance Project and the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center found in 2002 that:

- 74 percent of physically or sexually abused women were injured and 68.8 percent of them sustained more than one type of injury.
- 74.7 percent of abused women reported that they had suffered multiple forms of violence from an intimate partner.

- 55.3 percent of abused women reported that their partner was under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the most recent abuse.
- 52.5 percent reported some type of psychological abuse.
- 47.1 percent reported that their children were present during the abuse.

### Who to call for help:

- National Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799-SAFE (7233)
- Kentucky Domestic Violence Association (502) 209-5382 / [www.kdva.org](http://www.kdva.org)
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673

If you or someone you love is a victim of domestic violence, please make the call.

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