

**PROTOCOL FOR: Abuse: Domestic Violence**

**POLICY:** The Social Work Department will be notified of any patients (women or men ages 18-60) suspected of being victims or potential victims of domestic violence.

**DESIRED PATIENT**

- OUTCOMES:**
1. The patient's safety will be maintained while hospitalized.
  2. The patient will be offered support and counseling services.
  3. The patient will be discharged to a safe environment.

**CLINICAL  
ASSESSMENT AND**

- CARE:**
1. Assess for signs and symptoms of domestic violence:
    - a. History of frequent visits/calls to the emergency department and/or admissions to the hospital.
    - b. Explanation of injury incongruent with type of injury.
    - c. Injuries or unusual parts of the body on several different surfaces or in central areas.
    - d. Delay between onset of injury and presentation for treatment.
    - e. Multiple bruises and injuries at various stages of healing.
    - f. Patterns left by whatever was used to inflict injury (teeth, ropes, hands, cigarette tips, etc.).
    - g. Injuries to pregnant women, miscarriage.
    - h. History of depression/anxiety/suicide attempts.
    - i. History of drug/alcohol abuse.
    - j. A companion who is overprotective, hostile or who insists on telling the history.
    - k. Admission by the patient of a violent and/or abusive domestic situation.
  2. Assess for indicators of fear of violence:
    - a. Inability to keep medical appointments.
    - b. Fear of intercourse.
    - c. Inability to practice safe sex.
    - d. Inability to obtain and take prescribed medications.
    - e. Inability to enroll in early prenatal care.
    - f. History of abuse as a child.

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- g. History of abuse or neglect of own child.
- 3. If domestic violence is suspected, talk with the patient privately:
  - a. Ask direct questions such as, "Has someone hurt you?", "Are you safe at home?", "Are you afraid of someone hurting you?".
  - b. Validate and support the patient's concerns.
- 4. Contact and collaborate with the Social Work Department to:
  - a. Institute safety precautions for the patient while in the hospital.
  - b. Provide the patient with information regarding his/her legal rights.
  - c. Consult with the patient on a safe discharge plan and provide appropriate referrals.

**PATIENT**

- TEACHING:** 1. Educate patient regarding resources available for support.

- DOCUMENTATION:** 1. Document in the medical record any discussions with the patient regarding domestic violence.
2. Document any patient education on the Patient and Family Teaching Record.

**APPROVAL:** Nursing Standards Committee  
Department of Social Work

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 10/94

**REVISION DATES:** 7/97, 10/97, 11/99, 8/02, 8/08

**REVIEWED DATES:** 11/09