



# Men Abused by Women

## Information Sheet

Between 1999 and 2004, more than half a million men in Canada had a female partner who was violent toward them. The partner might have been a wife, an ex-wife or a common-law partner. This means about six per cent of men in intimate relationships have experienced abuse or violence from their partners.<sup>1</sup>

### Get Help

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

For help in your community or more information, please call the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line toll-free at **310-1818** or visit [www.familyviolence.alberta.ca](http://www.familyviolence.alberta.ca).

### So what is abuse?

#### A pattern of controlling behaviour

- Abuse in intimate relationships is a pattern of behaviours where one partner dominates, belittles or humiliates the other.
- Abuse of men by their partners happens when the partner uses emotional, physical, sexual or intimidation tactics. She\* does it to control the man, get her own way and prevent him from leaving the relationship. The abused man is always adapting his behaviour to do what his partner wants, in the hopes of preventing further abuse.
- The primary motive for abuse is to establish and maintain power and control over a partner. The abused partner resists the attempts to control him. In turn, the abusive woman takes additional steps to regain control over her partner.
- Abuse in intimate relationships is not typically an isolated incident. Abuse happens over time. If abuse is allowed to continue, it becomes more frequent and more severe.

### Control tactics: four kinds of abuse

Often when people think about abuse, they think of emotional abuse, physical abuse, or sexual abuse. Abuse may also include intimidation tactics.

#### EMOTIONAL ABUSE TACTICS include:

- Putdowns
- Controlling finances
- Isolating her partner and restricting his freedoms
- Spiritual abuse (ridicules or insults religion or spiritual beliefs)

#### PHYSICAL ABUSE TACTICS include any activity that can cause physical pain or injury.

#### SEXUAL ABUSE TACTICS include:

- Uses force or pressure to get her partner to have sex in a way he does not want
- Ridicules or criticizes his performance
- Withholds affection or sex to punish him for violating her rules

**INTIMIDATION TACTICS** are any words or actions that the abusive partner uses to scare her partner. For example: destroying property, threatening, stalking or harassing.

\* Abusers can be female or male. This publication deals with male victims, see "Women Abused in Intimate Relationships" information sheet or booklet available at [www.familyviolence.alberta.ca](http://www.familyviolence.alberta.ca).



## *Society's attitudes can make it harder*

Our society is beginning to recognize and study the abuse of men by their partners. Society's inappropriate beliefs and attitudes about men have kept this kind of abuse hidden:

- Men are supposed to protect women
- Men don't get pushed around by women
- Men are not supposed to hit back even when a woman is hitting them
- Men should be able to "handle" their women

Because of these beliefs, men who are abused by female partners may be slow to admit it. They may not want to tell anyone. Sometimes police and other professionals may not take the abuse seriously.

As a result, a man in an abusive relationship may have some of these feelings:

- Afraid to tell anyone
- Depressed or humiliated
- Afraid he has failed as a lover
- Confused because sometimes she acts loving and kind
- Believes he deserved it

## *Ten things you can do if you are being abused*

1. First, make sure you and any children are physically safe.  
**If you are in immediate danger, call 911.**
2. Make a safety plan. If your partner has ever been violent, the violence could happen again at any time. You will need a safety plan so that you can get to a safe place quickly if necessary. See "Safety Plan" suggestions in the "Men Abused by Women in Intimate Relationships" booklet, available at [www.familyviolence.alberta.ca](http://www.familyviolence.alberta.ca).
3. Know you are not responsible for the abuse. The abuse is the responsibility of the person who is abusive.
4. Understand that abuse and violence will likely continue without intervention.
5. Tell someone you trust about the abuse. Choose someone who will believe you. Secrecy gives abuse power. Do not give up.
6. Find out more about abuse in relationships. You are not alone. About six per cent of Canadian men report being abused by partners.<sup>2</sup>
7. Find out what help is available in or near your community. Call the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line toll-free at **310-1818** or visit [www.familyviolence.alberta.ca](http://www.familyviolence.alberta.ca) for more information.
8. Get professional help from a qualified counsellor.
9. Look after yourself. You are in a difficult situation that takes energy and strength. Make time to do some things that feel good.
10. Spend time with healthy people. Even if they cannot help you directly, being with healthy people will remind you that most people have kind and rewarding relationships. You can too.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada (2006, October). *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends 2006* (Catalogue No. 85-570-XIE). Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved from <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=85-570-XIE&lang=eng>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.