

# Are you experiencing abuse?

Do you know how to protect yourself?



*Help, Hope & Healing*



## Are you experiencing abuse? Do you know how to protect yourself?

Are you experiencing abuse by your partner, but aren't sure how to protect yourself or how to leave? Although you cannot control your partner's violence, you may be able to increase your own safety and that of your children. This brochure describes the actions you can take to increase your safety and the safety of your children, and describes how you can develop a plan to leave.

Safety planning is a top priority, whether you choose to remain in the home or leave. Take one action at a time and start with the one that is easiest and safest for you.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing violence against women. You can reach out to organizations in your community to support you.



*The information in this brochure was adapted from the following:*

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## Protecting yourself while living with an abuser

- Tell someone you trust about the abuse (e.g. friend, religious advisor, counsellor or doctor)
- Think about your partner's past use and level of force. This will help you predict what type of danger you and your children are facing and when to leave.
- Talk to your children. Tell them the abuse is not their fault and help them plan to keep safe.
- Plan how you will get out of your home safely in an emergency and where you will go. Teach your children how to get help. Tell them not to get between you and your partner if there is violence. Plan a code word to signal they should get help or leave.
- Don't run to a place where the children are, as your partner may hurt them as well.
- Ask your neighbours, friends and family to call the police if they hear sounds of abuse and to look after your children in an emergency.
- If an argument is developing, move to a space where you can get outside easily. Don't go to a room where there is access to potential weapons (e.g. kitchen, workshop or bathroom).
- If you are being hurt, protect your face with your arms around each side of your head, with your fingers locked together.
- Park your car by backing it into the driveway and keep it fuelled.
- Hide your keys, cell phone and some money near your escape route.
- Have a list of phone numbers to call for help. If it's an emergency, call the police, or 911 if available in your community.
- Be aware if weapons and ammunition are in the home.

## Getting ready to leave

When you are planning to leave, here are some suggestions:

- Contact the police or a local transition house or safe home. Let the staff know you intend to leave an abusive situation and ask for support in safety planning. (information shared with the police may result in charges being laid against the abuser).
- If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask them to document your visit.
- Gather important documents: identification, bank cards, financial papers related to family assets, last Canada Income Tax Return, keys, medication, pictures of the abuser and your children, passports, health cards, personal address/telephone book, cell phone, and legal documents (e.g. immigration papers, house deed/lease, restraining orders/peace bonds).
- If you can't keep these things stored in your home for fear your partner will find them, consider making copies and leave them with someone you trust.
- Consult a lawyer. Keep any evidence of physical abuse (such as photos). Keep a journal of all violent incidents, noting dates, events, threats and any witnesses.
- Put together pictures, jewellery and objects of sentimental value, as well as toys and comforts for your children.
- Arrange with someone to care for your pets temporarily, until you get settled.
- Remember to clear your phone of the last number you called to avoid his using redial.

## Leaving the abuser

Here are some suggestions for your personal safety when you leave:

- Request a police escort or ask a friend, neighbour or family member to accompany you when you leave.
- Contact your local transition house or safe home. It may be a safer temporary spot than going to a place your partner knows.
- Do not tell your partner you are leaving. Leave quickly.
- Have a back-up plan if your partner finds out where you are going.

## After leaving

Here are some actions you should take after you or your partner has left the relationship:

- Visit the closest police station and ask to speak to an officer about domestic violence.
- Consider applying for a restraining order or peace bond that may help keep your partner away from you and your children. Keep it with you at all times.
- Provide police with a copy of any legal orders you have.
- Consult a lawyer or legal aid clinic about actions to protect yourself or your children. Let your lawyer know if there are any Criminal Court proceedings.
- Consider changing any service provider that you share with your ex-partner.
- Obtain an unlisted telephone number, get caller ID and block your number when calling out.
- Make sure your children's school or daycare centre is aware of the situation and has copies of all relevant documents.
- Carry a photo of the abuser and your children with you.
- Ask your neighbours to look after your children in an emergency and to call the police if they see the abuser.

## After leaving (continued)

- Take extra precautions at work, at home and in the community. Consider telling your supervisor at work about your situation.
- Think about places and patterns that your ex-partner will know about and try to change them. For example, consider using a different grocery store or place of worship.
- If you feel unsafe walking alone, ask a neighbour, friend or family member to accompany you.
- Do not return to your home unless accompanied by the police. Never confront the abuser.

### What are peace bonds and restraining orders?

*Peace bonds and restraining orders (known collectively as protection orders), are orders made by a judge in court (criminal court for peace bonds, civil court for restraining orders) to help protect one person from another.*

***If you are concerned about your immediate safety, call the police, or 911 if available in your community.***

## Who can help?

Call VictimLink BC at 1 800 563-0808, a 24-hour crisis line for B.C. in up to 110 languages.

[www.victimlinkbc.ca](http://www.victimlinkbc.ca)

In an emergency, call your local police or 911, if available in your community.

**Stopping violence against women  
is everyone's responsibility.**

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

[www.gov.bc.ca/pssg](http://www.gov.bc.ca/pssg)

