

With people spending more time at home throughout the pandemic, there is an increased risk of intimate partner violence (IPV). Stress, the disruption of social and protective networks, and decreased access to services can exacerbate the risk of IPV.

If you or someone you know are a victim of intimate partner violence (IPV), call VictimLink BC at **1-800-563-0808** for toll-free, confidential, multilingual support available 24/7. In an emergency, call 911.

### BE AWARE AND PREPARED

- Identify information on local services for survivors, including hotlines, shelters, rape crisis centers, and counselling. Identify services that can be offered remotely.
- Display resources related to IPV in your patients' waiting room and on your clinic website.
- Prepare discrete printed cards or a page on your clinic website listing phone numbers and addresses for support.

### IDENTIFY SIGNS

Patients experiencing IPV often present to their physician with a wide range of complaints. Pay attention to signs such as:

- Depression or suicide attempts
- Defensive/repeat injuries, or injuries that do not match the cause given
- Repeat reproductive health problems
- Psychological or behavioural problems
- Chronic medical complaints, such as pelvic problems and pains.

### HOLD A CONVERSATION

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the LIVES approach to help those surviving through IPV:

- **Listen** closely, with empathy and no judgement—focus on what happened, not why.
- **Inquire** about the patient's needs and concerns.
- **Validate** the patient's experiences. Show you believe and understand. Express empathy.
- **Enhance** their safety.
- **Support** patients to connect with additional services.

It is advisable not to discuss IPV with children or when the partner is present. The patient should always be clothed when discussing IPV.

### PLAN FOR SAFETY

Create a safety plan together with your patient. The plan may include:

- Making copies of personal documents and keys.
- Securing money.
- Preparing a grab-bag of essential items.
- Identifying a safe place to go to, such as a trusted relative's house or a local domestic violence shelter, and how to get there. Write down phone numbers.
- Establishing a code word or hand signal with trusted friends or family to alert them to emergencies. See [canadianwomen.org/signal-for-help](https://canadianwomen.org/signal-for-help)

Provide the patient with a list of local and national resources, such as helplines and shelter addresses, in a way that is safe, e.g. entering details into their phone under a code name.

Do not pressure the patient to leave their partner.

Respect a patient's decision not to disclose. Express readiness to discuss IPV in future visits.

### DOCUMENT

Record the patient's words, describe the observed behaviour and injuries when present. Include an assessment of the patient's mental status, danger severity and follow-up plans.

In the event you identify that a child is in need of protection, you are required to report.

### ADDRESS YOUR OWN WELL-BEING

Although you may feel limited to listening, disclosure of abuse is found to decrease somatic complaints and improve well-being.

**Monitor any impact on your own mental health and seek care when needed. Access the Physician Health Program 24-Hour Help Line at 1-800-663-6729.**

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BCCFP COVID-19 Resources: [www.bccfp.bc.ca/covid-19](http://www.bccfp.bc.ca/covid-19)

BC Housing for Women Fleeing Violence: [www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/women-fleeing-violence](http://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/women-fleeing-violence)  
<https://canadianwomen.org/signal-for-help>

Pathways BC: [www.pathwaysbc.ca/info](http://www.pathwaysbc.ca/info)

WHO Health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence clinical handbook: [www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/vaw-clinical-handbook/en/](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/vaw-clinical-handbook/en/)

### SOURCES

[www.aafp.org/afp/2016/1015/p646.html](http://www.aafp.org/afp/2016/1015/p646.html)

[www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/family-violence-bc-1.5547385](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/family-violence-bc-1.5547385)

[www.cmpa-acpm.ca/serve/docs/ela/goodpracticesguide/pages/communication/Privacy\\_and\\_Confidentiality/mandatory\\_reporting-e.html](http://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/serve/docs/ela/goodpracticesguide/pages/communication/Privacy_and_Confidentiality/mandatory_reporting-e.html)

[www.jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/190985](http://www.jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/190985)

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3957738/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3957738/)

[www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/emergencies/COVID-19-VAW-full-text.pdf](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/emergencies/COVID-19-VAW-full-text.pdf)