

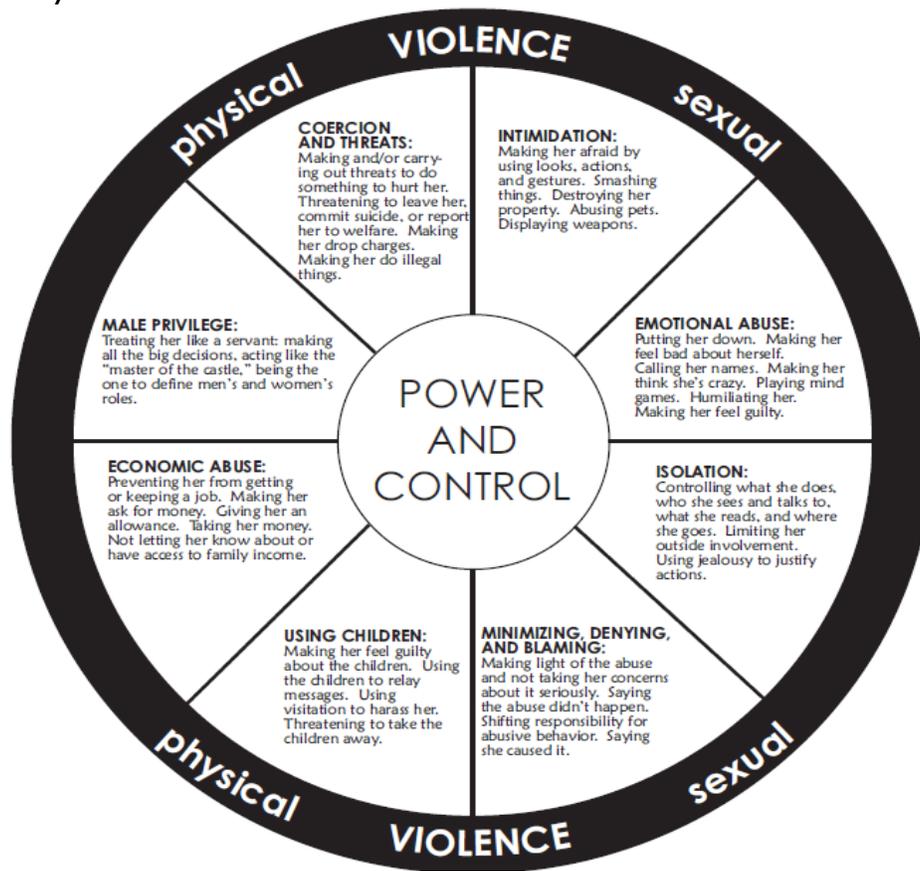
Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

Intimate Partner Violence

What is Intimate Partner Violence?

The term “intimate partner violence” (IPV) describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. IPV can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.

Perpetrators of IPV may try to exert power and control over their partners in a variety of ways.



There are four classifications of IPV:

- Physical violence: the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm.
- Sexual violence: unwanted sexual activity (attempted or completed).
- Emotional violence: trauma to the victim caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics.
- Stalking: repeated behavior that causes victims to feel a high level of fear.

What are the Facts?

- **1 in 4** women has experienced IPV in her lifetime
- 85% of IPV victims are women
- IPV affects women of all ages, races, religions and sexual orientations. Research suggests that it occurs more frequently among women:
 - Between ages 20-24
 - Native American
 - With an annual income under \$25,000
- Active duty women and Veterans report higher rates of IPV than civilian women
- Women are more likely to suffer physical and psychological consequences from IPV
- Women are at higher risk of IPV during pregnancy
- IPV is leading cause of maternal death in the US
- In 40% to 60% of families where there is IPV, child physical abuse is also present
- The health-related costs of intimate partner violence exceed \$5.8 billion each year

How Can IPV Affect Me?

- Women who have experienced IPV may have more physical health problems than those who have not. Some common health problems include headache, pelvic pain, abdominal pain, chest pain/palpitations, gastrointestinal problems, and chronic pain.
- Reproductive health problems are also common, such as sexually transmitted diseases, irregular periods, premenstrual symptoms and miscarriage.

- IPV may also contribute to mental health concerns. It can lead to depressed mood, feelings of worthlessness, worry, anxiety, emotional numbness, alcohol or drug abuse, and suicidal thoughts or behavior.
- Women who have experienced IPV may have difficulties with job and career, such as missed days.

What Can I Do?

Develop a Plan to Stay Safe

Making a safety plan is something you can do to improve your safety now and in the future.

Some important safety practices are:

- If you think that you or your children are in danger, leave the situation right away.
- Write down a list of safe places within your home to go when conflicts begin to heat up. Avoid rooms with weapons or with no exits (such as closets, bathrooms).
- Consider finding a code word to use as a distress signal to family members, children, and friends. Inform them in advance that if they hear you use the code word, they should get help right away.
- Pack a suitcase with items to take with you when you leave. Make copies of important legal documents (such as driver's license, social security cards, birth certificates, medical records showing previous injuries) and set some money aside. Hide these items in a place where your partner will not find them.
- Make a list of people and agencies you can call or go to in case of an emergency. Learn key phone numbers (such as the number for your local shelter, even if you think you won't need it)
- Write down your safety plan. A format is available from the [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#).

Seek Support

It may be difficult to seek help from IPV because of feelings of shame or doubt. You may also feel alone because your partner has kept you away from your support system. If you have been threatened, even indirectly, with harm to you or your loved ones, you might feel afraid of what could happen if you tell about your

experiences or try to get help. It can take a lot of time and courage to decide to seek help.

Remember that although you cannot stop your partner's behavior (only he or she can do that), you can find support for yourself and your children. Stay connected to friends and family who support your health and safety. Also, many professional resources and providers are available and well-trained to help you in a private and respectful manner.

If you are a victim of intimate partner violence, please consult your primary care provider or your behavioral health provider in primary care for assistance and support.