

TOP 7 SIGNS OF ABUSE & NEGLECT IN NURSING HOMES



PRESSURE SORES

Pressure sores, also known as bedsores, are skin lesions that typically form due to constant pressure on a bony part of the body. Bedsores often show up on ankles, elbows, heels and the tailbone, and they are a sign of neglect.

FALLS

Nursing home staff play an important role in protecting the safety of residents as they move about the facility. Residents at risk of falling should be monitored closely, receive assistance with transfers to prevent falls and have access to bed rails, non-skid footwear, appropriate wheelchairs and comfort chairs with wheels locked at bedside, walkers and canes. Although some falls are unavoidable, falls in nursing homes are often a sign of negligence and understaffing.

MEDICATION ERRORS

Residents often receive the wrong medication or dosage. This occurs as a result of staff carelessness, poor supervision of nurses administering medications, and understaffing. Overmedication – administering medications to sedate or “manage” residents – or administering medications for some other purpose than their intended use (“off-label use”) can cause personality changes, lethargy, confusion and withdrawn or reclusive behavior. Medication errors can lead to serious medical issues.

PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Nursing home residents are easy targets of physical or sexual abuse because of their dependence on others. Many residents cannot communicate, and therefore cannot report abuse themselves. Physical abuse includes sexual assault, physical assault or maltreatment. Signs include unexplained cuts, bruises, burns or broken bones. Residents also may become withdrawn or anxious. Nursing homes are responsible for protecting the safety and well-being of residents under their care.

DEHYDRATION & MALNUTRITION

Residents who do not receive adequate nutrition and hydration are at risk for the development of pressure ulcers, infection and muscle weakness that can lead to falls. Malnutrition and dehydration also make it more difficult for existing pressure ulcers and infections to heal. Nursing homes often fail to take steps to prevent malnutrition by not monitoring resident food intake and output, not providing a comfortable environment to promote eating, and not providing food that is appetizing.

CHOKING

Nursing home residents often have medical problems or take medications that make it difficult to properly chew or swallow food. This puts them at high risk for choking and means they should be closely monitored during mealtimes. Choking can cause brain damage, and even death. While choking may appear to be accidental, it can sometimes result from nursing home negligence.

WANDERING AND ELOPEMENT

Elopement is when a resident leaves the nursing home unsupervised and unnoticed, putting their safety in danger. Wandering is aimless and unsafe movement throughout the facility. Either puts residents at risk for falls, exposure to harsh weather and other significant danger. Staff must provide each resident with the appropriate level of supervision and use alarms on exits to prevent elopement and wandering behavior.

If you believe your loved one has experienced abuse or neglect in a nursing home,
contact the [Illinois Department of Public Health](#) at 800-252-4343.

If an injury occurs, call us at 312-332-2872 or visit www.levinperconti.com.
