

STOP violence



Dealing with domestic violence

Who is this leaflet for?

This is for you if you are abused by your husband or partner. Or, if you know of a woman in this situation, please pass it on.

Women are the main victims of domestic violence throughout the world. However, this leaflet may also be of use to men who are abused by their partner.

You live in fear, you feel alone, you are ashamed, you feel you have to put up with the violence.

As a foreigner, you may feel very isolated, far away from your family and friends, and you don't know who to turn to.

You don't have to suffer alone. Talk about it, even if it's difficult. Help is available.

Violence is sometimes difficult to define.

What counts as physical violence?

This is when, for example, your husband or partner

- pushes you around
- slaps you in the face
- punches or kicks you
- burns you
- injures you with a knife or other weapon

What counts as psychological violence?

This is when, for example, your husband or partner

- insults you
- humiliates you
- threatens you
- stops you from seeing your friends or family
- isolates you
- torments you constantly

What counts as economic violence?

This is when, for example, your husband or partner

- refuses to let you go out to work
- does not pay his fair share of the household expenses
- takes your money without your consent

What counts as sexual violence?

This is when, for example, your husband or partner

- uses physical force or threats to make you have sex

All of these acts are unacceptable.

Some are against the law in Switzerland. Domestic violence is unacceptable, regardless of the excuses given or of common practice in your country of origin.

The cycle of violence



What can you do?

Get a medical report every time you are abused. If you have experienced physical violence, make sure you are examined by a doctor, preferably the same day or as soon as possible afterwards.

Ask the doctor for a detailed medical report outlining all the marks and injuries caused by the attack, including the psychological effects (shock, anxiety, insomnia). This is evidence that you may wish to use at a later date.

Keep the original report somewhere outside of your home. For example, ask a friend to keep it safe, or leave it with the doctor.

You are entitled to receive help in all confidentiality, even if you do not have a residence permit. There are people who can listen to you, give advice and help you find the means to protect yourself and get out of your situation (information on your rights, financial aid, legal aid, housing).

If you are a victim of domestic violence or if you feel threatened, you are entitled by law in Switzerland to seek protection. For example, you can leave your home and take your children to a safe place of refuge.

Confide in someone you trust or ask for help from the special services. If you find yourself in danger, call your local police station or dial the emergency number 117.

What the law says

Cases of domestic violence are automatically subject to public prosecution in Switzerland: this means that legal action is taken against the offender whenever the authorities (police, public prosecutor) become aware of the situation.

However, if you request and/or agree, and in the case of minor physical injuries, repeated assaults, threats or pressure, the competent authority may decide to suspend criminal proceedings for six months. If you do not ask for proceedings to be resumed within this period, the case will be closed (subject to further appeal).

Cases of forced sex or marital rape cannot be suspended.

While violence may not always leave a visible scar on your body, it does have a negative effect on your wellbeing, wearing away your self-confidence. It can thus have serious repercussions on your overall health.

And even if they don't show it, your children are also affected. Their suffering is often expressed in their behaviour: problems at school, restlessness, difficulties in connecting with children of the same age, etc.

Violence sets a bad example for children, who tend to copy the type of behaviour learnt in the home.

There are alternatives to a life of violence.

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