

# Staying Safe During COVID-19

In the United States, about 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men report experiencing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

**SOCIAL DISTANCE DOESN'T MEAN DISCONNECTED.**

**VA CAN HELP.**

Veterans may be at higher risk, with some studies finding rates up to 70% among women Veterans receiving health care in VA.

Research has shown that relationship conflict, or even abuse, occurs or escalates during times of crisis. When experiencing IPV, any disruption to normal life or access to services can mean increased potential for harm.



**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE & CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

The National Domestic Violence  
**HOTLINE**  
1.800.799.SAFE (7233) • 1.800.787.3224 (TTY)

**IPVAP**  
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration

## What are some examples of abuse?

- Monitoring a person's cell phone or internet activity
- Keeping a person isolated or limiting access to private communication with others
- Using threats to scare a partner as a form of control or coercion:
  - ⇒ threatening to kick a partner out of their home where they have no shelter in a pandemic situation,
  - ⇒ threatening to kick someone out of the home if they become ill, and
  - ⇒ withholding access to medical care are all forms of coercion
- Exposing person and their loved ones to risk regardless of pleas
- Physical abuse (hitting, kicking, biting, choking, throwing things at a person, slamming them into something)

## How is relationship health and safety (including, IPV) impacted by COVID-19?

While social distancing may prevent the spread of COVID-19, those who are at home with a partner who uses violence may feel less safe than they would be outside of their home.

Preventative measures to control COVID-19 may limit access to resources and support (court houses, public service agencies, public transportation) that individuals impacted by IPV may rely on for assistance.

Without healthy outlets to decompress, relationship conflict can occur or escalate during times of crisis due to disruption of normal functioning as a couple or family (e.g., financial hardship, job change/loss, access to social resources).

## How is my health impacted by COVID-19?

Individuals who are impacted by IPV are at risk for experiencing a range of adverse health consequences, including stress, depression, and anxiety. These health concerns may significantly compromise immune system functioning which is associated with increased risk related to COVID-19.

Partners may use healthcare coercion (a form of IPV) to negatively impact their partner's health and/or access to healthcare.

## How do I stay safe?

Everyone's safety plan is different.

A safety plan may include ways to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave.

There are many options to safety planning, including:



- An application downloaded to your smartphone, such as [myPlan](#)
- Worksheets or interactive guides found on IPV/Domestic Violence (DV) organizations websites, such as <https://www.loveisrespect.org/for-yourself/safety-planning/interactive-safety-plan/>
- By following safety planning tips on <https://www.thehotline.org/help/path-to-safety/>
- Getting help from a healthcare provider or advocate

## Safety Planning Tips:

- If possible, always have a phone accessible and know what numbers to call for help. Monitor the hours of businesses near you to access a phone, if needed. Know the phone number to your local shelter. If your life is in danger, call the police.
- Communicate with your support system outside of your home. Discuss your safety plan with people you trust (neighbor, family member, friend). You may have a code word or signal to notify those you trust that you are in danger or need help.
- Pack a "to-go bag" or leave items/documents with a friend or family member to have access if you need to leave the home abruptly.
- Find areas of the home that are free of weapons and with an escape route, then plan to go there if there is an escalation of violence.

## How can I build healthy relationships?

If your relationship is safe and supportive, this can be a time to reconnect. Here are some tips:

- Play a board game
- Cook a meal together
- Complete a family project
- Exercise together
- Make a fun video
- Choreograph a dance
- Watch home movies

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VA CAN HELP.**



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My local Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program Coordinator is:

Link to find your local IPVAP Coordinator:

<https://www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV/Coordinators.asp>



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Who can help?

While people are encouraged to stay at home, you may feel isolated from your friends and family. Even if you are isolated, try to maintain social connections online or over the phone (if it is safe to do so) and try to establish routines as much as possible. Check on your friends and family who may identify increased stress and conflict.

The VA is diligently working within the healthcare system and with other community providers to ensure Veterans, their partners, and VA staff have resources and information to assist with relationship health and safety. You can reach out to your local IPVAP Coordinator and/or other members of your healthcare team. A list of local IPVAP Coordinators can be found at <https://www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV/Index.asp>.

**For anyone that needs support, help is available and you are not alone.**

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**Veterans  
 Crisis Line**



**Military  
 Crisis Line**

**1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1**

Texting is also an option: text LOVEIS to 22522.

As always, the VA has 24 hour access to Veterans in crisis.