



# Intimate Partner Violence

## Common Signs & Symptoms

If you know that a patient might be experiencing IPV or if a patient discloses IPV, notify appropriate team members discreetly. Share this information only with appropriate designated team members, such as a clinic manager, social worker, behavioral health specialist, or supervising clinician. Remember, many signs of IPV can also be results of other health conditions or life stressors. Isolated symptoms do not confirm abuse, but patterns over time, especially inconsistencies in explanations or repeated injuries may warrant further inquiry.

### Physical

- Unexplained bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures
- Injuries at different stages of healing
- Frequent visits to the clinic for vague or nonspecific complaints (e.g., headaches, chronic pain, gastrointestinal issues)
- Injuries inconsistent with the given explanation
- Signs of strangulation (e.g., bruises around the neck, difficulty swallowing, hoarseness)

### Psychological & Emotional

- Anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts
- Low self-esteem or self-blame
- Hypervigilance or appearing fearful, especially when the partner is present
- Signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as flashbacks or nightmares
- Difficulty concentrating or memory problems

### Behavioral

- Avoidance of medical appointments or frequent cancellations
- Reluctance to answer questions openly, especially in the presence of a partner
- Unusual nervousness, hesitation, or fearfulness
- Signs of substance abuse as a coping mechanism

### Social

- Isolation from friends, family, or support systems
- Partner speaking on behalf of the patient or being overly controlling
- Limited access to financial resources or personal identification
- Frequent relocation or unstable living situations

### Reproductive & Sexual Health

- Unexplained sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Frequent unintended pregnancies or repeated requests for emergency contraception
- Signs of reproductive coercion, such as interference with birth control methods
- Reports of sexual violence or discomfort discussing sexual health



# Intimate Partner Violence Sample Workflow

Any of our health center patients could be experiencing IPV, so we must be prepared to address these situations with empathy and care. Use this sample workflow to review the basic steps to take when a patient screens positive for IPV and to build your health center's own procedure.

1

## Clinic staff takes vitals and asks IPV screening questions.

When asking questions about IPV, it is always best to ask privately when the patient is alone. This might mean asking anyone accompanying the patient to step out of the exam room. NextGen does not have a standard screening tool for IPV, so your clinic will have to choose which screening tool you want to use. See the next page for an example.

2

## If patient screens positive, clinic staff need to notify \_\_\_\_\_ via \_\_\_\_\_.

[Add staff member] [Notification method]

Use empathy and care to respond to the patient. "Thank you for sharing this with me. You are not alone, and this is not your fault." "There are people who can help, and I am here to support you."

3

## Designated clinic staff person, \_\_\_\_\_, discusses the situation with the patient and offers additional support.

[Add staff member]

The patient maintains the right to refuse help. To ensure the patient's safety, provide emotional support and keep the door open for future assistance while respecting their autonomy.

4

## If patient accepts additional support, \_\_\_\_\_ can assist with resources and safety planning.

[Add staff member]

Use the document at the end of this packet as a reference for community resources. Resources and safety plans should be provided in a discrete format that will not place the patient at further risk.

5

## Document the encounter confidentially

Record only necessary details in the medical record while prioritizing safety. Avoid using detailed language that could put the patient at risk if their abuser gains access to their records. Consider documenting in an a private or locked record if this is available in your EHR.

6

## Provide follow-up & continued support

Schedule a follow-up appointment or check-in. Offer ongoing support through counseling or referrals. Reassess safety and well-being at future visits.

7

## Debrief as a team

When a patient reports IPV, it affects the team members caring for that patient, especially if the patient refuses help. Help staff by scheduling a time for those involved in a positive IPV response to discuss what happened. A debrief conversation can include what went well in the team's response and what the team would do differently in the future. Team managers should consider reminding staff involved how to access your Employee Assistance Program benefits if they need further support.



# Intimate Partner Violence Example Screening

This IPV screening script can help you practice asking screening questions in a way that sounds natural. Practicing with a script will help reduce potential anxiety and discomfort.

Do not bring this document in the exam room. This is for practice only.  
Please utilize the provided postcard for patient screening.

Screening Step	Example Language
<b>Normalizing Statement</b>	We've started talking to all of our patients about safe and healthy relationships because it can have such a large impact on your health. Before we get started, I want you to know that everything here is confidential.
<b>PVS Assessment Tool</b>	(1a) Have you been hit, kicked, punched, or otherwise hurt by someone within the past year? (1b) [IF YES, then ask] If so, by whom? ----- (2) Do you feel safe in your current relationship? ----- (3) Is there a partner from a previous relationship who is making you feel unsafe now?
<b>Negative Screen</b>	Thank you for answering. We like to make sure our patients know this is a safe place to discuss their relationships.
<b>Positive Screen</b>	Thank you for sharing with me, I know it can be difficult to talk about these topics. I want you to know that you're not alone, and there are resources and support available to help you. If you'd like, I can provide you with information about local organizations that offer counseling, legal assistance, and safe housing. We can also talk about a safety plan if you're interested. How can I best support you today?



# Intimate Partner Violence Safety Planning

One of the ways you can help a patient experiencing IPV is to help create a safety plan. A safety plan is a comprehensive plan for your patient to protect themselves and any pets or children from domestic violence while in a relationship, leaving, or after they leave.

Creating a safety plan is easy - find a private place to sit with a patient, use the link or QR code below, and work through the questions together. Each patient's safety plan will be different, but generally includes:

- Creating a "to-go" bag
- Planning a safe escape
- Establishing a code word
- Involving trusted contacts
- Seeking professional support
- Documenting abuse
- Protecting privacy
- Staying connected with friends and family

To assist your patient with safety planning, visit the website below or scan the QR code.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**  
provides a great tool for creating a safety plan.

[www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety](http://www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety)

SCAN  
HERE





# Intimate Partner Violence Community Resources

National Resource	Service	Contact
<b>National Domestic Violence Hotline</b>	We are here to serve all those impacted by relationship abuse 24/7 confidentially.	<b>Call:</b> 1-800-799-SAFE <b>Text:</b> "START" to 88788 <b>Chat Online:</b> theHotline.org
<b>National Sexual Assault Hotline</b>	Chat online or by phone with a trained staff member who can provide you confidential crisis support.	<b>Call:</b> 1-800-656-HOPE <b>Chat Online:</b> Hotline.RAINN.org

**Complete this chart with local resources for patients experiencing IPV.  
Make sure to review this list periodically and update as needed.**

Local Resource	Service	Contact

# More Information

Source	Website
National Domestic Violence Hotline	<a href="http://www.thehotline.org">www.thehotline.org</a>
DomesticShelters.Org	<a href="http://www.domesticshelters.org">www.domesticshelters.org</a>
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	<a href="http://cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence">cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence</a>
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence	<a href="http://www.nrcdv.org">www.nrcdv.org</a>
Health Partners on IPV + Exploitation	<a href="http://www.healthpartnersipve.org">www.healthpartnersipve.org</a>

## References

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