

Intimate Partner Violence in a Pandemic: Controlling Behaviours Related to COVID-19

The risk of intimate partner violence (IPV) gets worse when there is a crisis like a pandemic. Social and physical distancing can make it hard for women to get help. Violent partners who try to control and hurt women can become more dangerous during a pandemic. A pandemic makes it easy for them to lie about safety measures and keep women scared.

For example, partners may:

- Share the wrong information about the pandemic to try to scare or control women. An abusive partner might lie and say domestic violence shelters are full, unclean, or closed.
- Not allow women to see a doctor. They might take car keys or health cards, refuse to interpret, and more.
- Keep a mother from her children by saying she is sick. They might keep her in one room or say she can't go outside.
- Hide items such as hand sanitizer, cleaning products, protective masks, food, and medicine
- Lie that important personal items are not available in stores or online (such as birth control, hormones, hearing aid batteries)
- Pretend that physical distancing means women must stay away from family and friends, during or even after the pandemic
- Control and watch the way a partner communicates. They might turn off the internet so she cannot video chat with friends and family.
- Make women feel bad for them so that women let them in their house. They might say they have no place to stay or that they need to see their children when it is not safe.
- Infect or threaten to infect women with COVID-19 on purpose
- Put women's health in danger on purpose by inviting people over, or not cleaning their hands
- Threaten to tell people that a woman has COVID-19. They may lie about what will happen if people find out. They may say she will be deported, or lose custody of her children.
- Remove or kill pets or animals. They may lie and say animals can infect the family.

Controlling behaviours are harmful! Intimate partner violence toward women will be different depending on things like her age, race, how much money she makes, her ability, or where she lives.

For example, women who have weak immune systems ([immunocompromised](#)) are more likely to become very sick from COVID-19. Women living with disabilities whose partners take care of them [may face even worse abuse](#), because their partners can make decisions about her health.

Help is available. Join us in raising awareness. Please share this infographic.

[The Learning Network](#) at the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children created this resource in collaboration with the following organizations: [Alberta Council of Women's Shelters](#), [BC Society of Transition Houses](#), [Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters](#), [Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses](#), [PEI Family Violence Prevention Services](#), [Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan](#), and [Women's Shelters Canada](#).

This resource was adapted for plain language by [Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia \(ISANS\)](#).