

WHY IS GOING TO MY DOCTOR OR NURSE SO HARD FOR ME?

If you are avoiding a visit to your healthcare provider, you are not alone. Many survivors of violence or abuse feel nervous or uncomfortable about seeing a provider. It can be hard when a provider is not aware of the ways that trauma can impact health, or they may seem rushed, making it hard to connect. Some people may be treated differently due to their background or circumstances.

THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY HEALTH CARE CAN BE HARD TO ACCESS



Partner controls finance or health care too costly



No transportation



Mistrust of healthcare system



No childcare



Fear of required reporting



Partner may prevent access to care



Fear of having your children taken from you



Fear of what will happen with your personal information



No one speaks the language you feel most comfortable using



Feeling unwelcome or excluded



In some states, health care providers are required to report certain types of violence-related injuries to law enforcement. To learn more about what health care providers are required to report in your state, or if you have concerns about confidentiality, you can ask your provider before sharing details.

OTHER RESOURCES:

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)
(TTY) 1-800-787-3224
www.thehotline.org

Advocates are available 24/7 by telephone (in over 140 languages) or over chat and texts (in English and Spanish)

Looking for low-cost and sliding scale health care where you live?

Find a Health Center
<https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Dial 988
Support available 24 hours/ day in English and Spanish

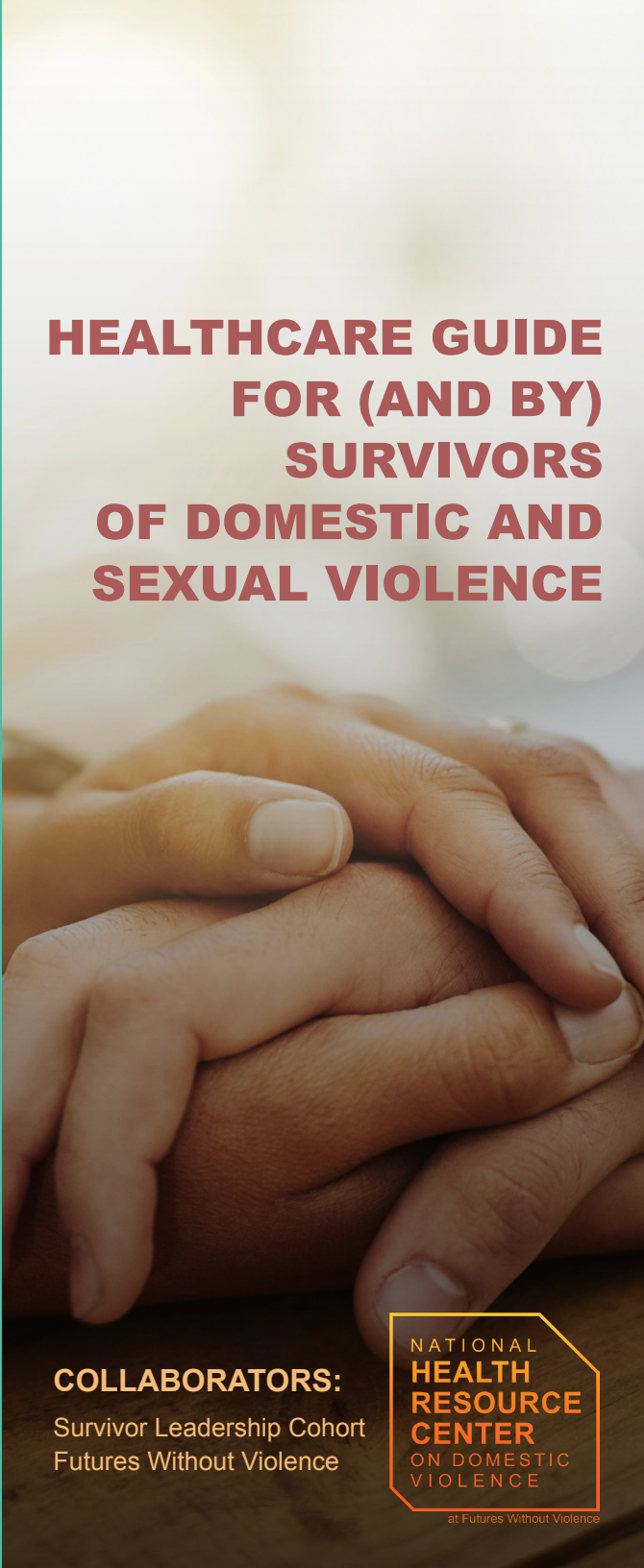
Learn more on the topic of accessing health care here:



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HEALTHCARE GUIDE FOR (AND BY) SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE



COLLABORATORS:

Survivor Leadership Cohort
Futures Without Violence



at Futures Without Violence

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT TO HELP PREPARE FOR YOUR VISIT:

What Do I Need?

For example, you may need:

- everyone in the room to identify themselves and their role in your care;
- the doctor or nurse to let you know when and where they will be touching you during an exam;
- info about how much the visit, referrals, and prescriptions will cost;
- an explanation of insurance benefits and support in keeping the details of your visit confidential if you are covered under your partner’s insurance;
- a trusted person in the room with you.

WHAT OTHER WAYS CAN I CREATE SUPPORT?

There are many ways to seek care.

Western medicine doesn’t always treat the whole person. Sometimes alternative, holistic approaches to healthcare—such as acupuncture, traditional healing, homeopathy, energy healing, yoga therapy—can support your healing.



What Do I Want To Get From This Visit?

For example, you may want an explanation of:

- your health status;
- any recommended next steps;
- the alternatives;
- the risks of doing nothing right now.

Talk to your provider about your concerns and trust your instincts. Remember, if you feel your needs aren’t being met, it’s okay to leave.

TIPS FOR ADVOCATING FOR YOURSELF DURING YOUR VISIT:

It’s common to feel fear, anxiety and worry about seeing a healthcare provider. And, if you have had bad experiences with health care, seeking care again may be hard. Remember:

- Answering questions or sharing something is **always** your choice.
- Your trust is something to be earned by your provider.
- Taking a person for support to your health visits is allowed and may be helpful.

Before and during the visit, try talking to your provider about what would make you feel more comfortable, for example:

- “I need a break. Can we continue after I have a few minutes to myself?”
- “Can you explain how this question is relevant to my healthcare?”
- “Can you explain each step of this exam before we begin and check in with me at each step of the exam?”
- “I need information on the cost of this procedure before we move forward.”
- “I am not going to be weighed today.”
- “I would like for us to focus on a plan that is not centered around changing my weight.”
- “I am not comfortable with this procedure. Is it medically necessary at this time or are there other options?”



WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR HEALTHCARE VISIT:

- Take some time to think about how it went.
- Write in a journal or talk to a friend about the experience.
- Think about what you felt and what you learned:
 - » How comfortable do you feel with how you were treated?
 - » How well did you understand any results or instructions given?
 - » Did you feel heard and respected?
 - » How well do you understand your options?
 - » What other information, support, or options do you need at this time?

CARE FOR YOURSELF BEFORE AND/OR AFTER YOUR VISIT:

- Move your body
- Do something creative
- Ground yourself through breathing
- Have a cup of tea
- Connect with loved ones

You are worth caring for!