



## Tool 1.3: Neglect: behaviours and signs

**Neglect** is a term used to describe the failure of a carer or responsible person to provide the necessities of life to an older person. Some examples are adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care and neglecting to meet a person's emotional needs.<sup>5</sup>

### Behaviours

- Failure to provide adequate: food; shelter; clean clothing; heating/cooling; medicines; medical or dental care.
- Under- or over-medication.
- Refusal to permit others to provide assessments or appropriate care.
- Preventing the person from accessing services and/or equipment and support.
- Exposure to danger or lack of supervision.
- An overly attentive carer in the company of others; the “hovering carer”.
- Misusing the role of Guardian.

### Signs

- Inadequate clothing; complaints by the person of being too cold or too hot.
- Poor personal hygiene; unkempt appearance.
- Lack of medical or dental care.
- Injuries that have not been properly cared for.
- Absence of required assistive technologies.
- Exposure to unsafe, unhealthy or unsanitary conditions.
- Unexplained weight loss; dehydration; and malnutrition.
- Poor skin integrity, e.g. pressure sores.

Self-neglect is not considered a form of elder abuse, although it can be a sign of abuse if, for example, the person is feeling hopeless or depressed from an abusive situation. Self-neglect may include living in unsafe or unhygienic conditions, refusing to seek or comply with treatment for injury or illness or failing to eat or drink adequately.

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### Joe's story

Joe is a 79-year-old gentleman; he has a diagnosis of dementia and other chronic illnesses. He lives in social housing with his son, Ben who is his carer and Power of Attorney.

Ben has cancelled Joe's aged-care services. Joe's clothes are soiled and dirty and he appears to have lost weight.

*Behaviours – Joe's son has cancelled aged-care services.*

*Signs – Joe has lost weight and has soiled, dirty clothes.*

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