



Steps I can take for me

If you're an older person looking to minimise the risk of elder abuse, use these steps to plan for your future and keep your independence and autonomy for longer.

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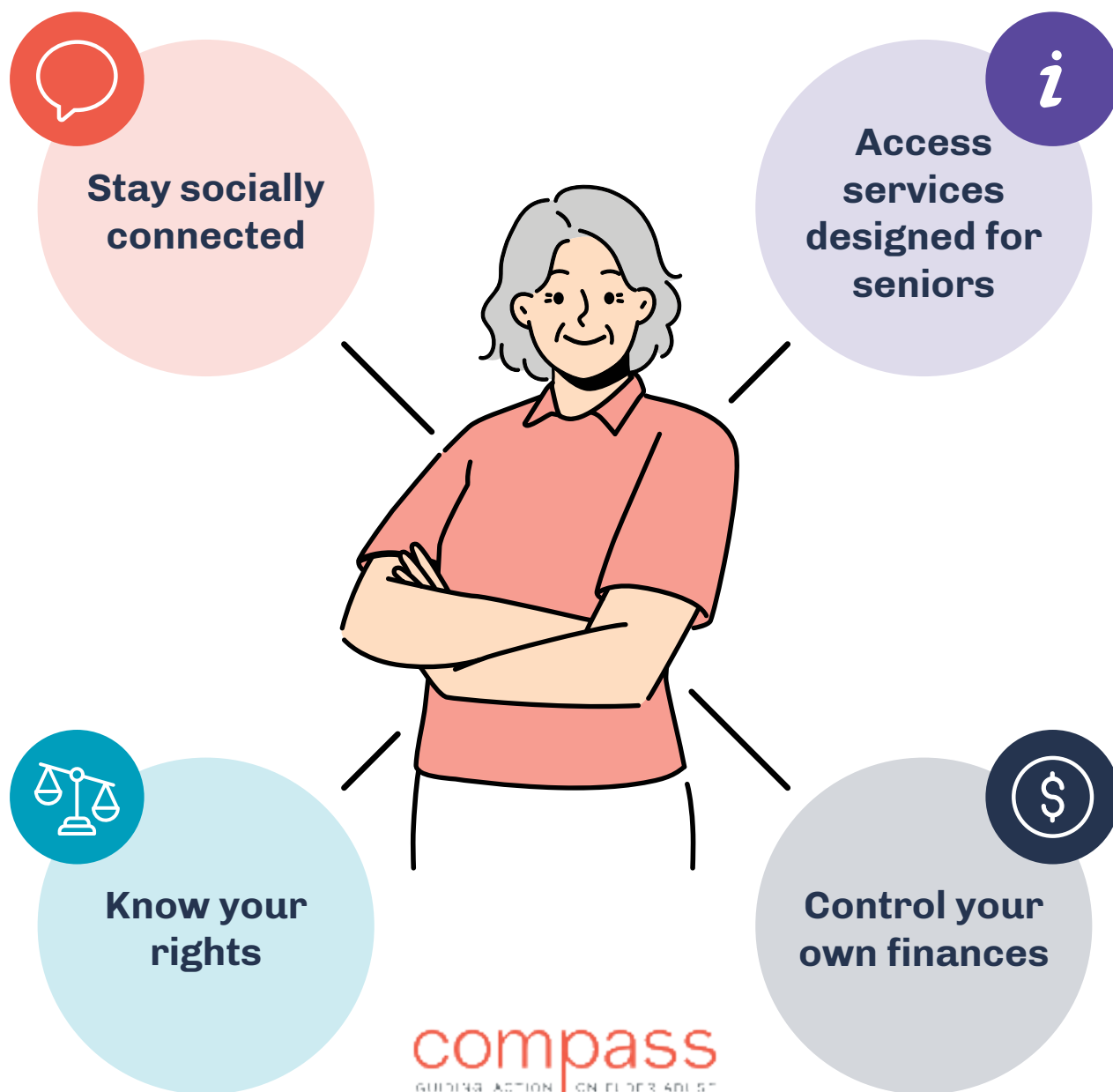
How to protect yourself from elder abuse

There are many causes of elder abuse, and a common one is the attitudes and actions of the person responsible for the harmful behaviour. You cannot always change other people's behaviours, but there are some things you can do to help minimise any risk of experiencing abuse.



Note: You can find this video on [Compass.info](https://compass.info)

A guide to keeping your independence for longer



As well as helping to protect you from elder abuse, the steps outlined below may also help you to maintain your independence and health as you get older.

Make your own decisions

Ageist attitudes, like the belief that older people are no longer capable of making their own decisions, are one of the big drivers of elder abuse.

Making your own decisions and choices are integral parts of every person's life, no matter your age. This includes decisions about where to live and who to live with, as well as how to spend your money and time.

Sometimes family members can put pressure on you to make changes or decisions as you get older. Remember that it's impossible to please everyone, and you don't need to! Try and make decisions about your own living arrangements and care that support the lifestyle that's important to you.

You have the right to make your own decisions about every part of your life. If you feel unsure of what to do, think through the possible consequences. Seek out further information from an independent source and discuss your decision-making with people who are supportive of you.

Managing family relationships

Read about ways to set boundaries and resolve arguments in older age.

More Information



Stay socially connected

It's important to stay in touch with family and friends. As humans, we thrive on quality contact and our relationships with others. Without these connections, we can become isolated and feel depressed, sad and lonely. People in that state are more likely to make poor decisions or be exploited.

Maintaining connections – with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues – can help prevent abuse. This is because you have other people to talk with about any concerns or to ask for help if someone is being hurtful to you.

It's not always easy to reach out to others and it can sometimes take an extra effort, particularly if you're experiencing a period of ill health or trouble getting about. But it's worth the effort to keep loved ones close.

Getting out and about can make it easier to stay socially connected and feel good. Exercising every day, even if it's a gentle walk or gardening, can also help boost energy levels, activate 'happy hormones' and extend life.

Stay active within your communities

If you are no longer working as you grow older, you may feel more isolated. Attending community events can help to create an active social life, give you a sense of purpose and make a connection to the things that are important to you.

Ideas for staying active and connected

Discover easy ways you can stay fit, active and connected.

More Information



Know your rights

Every person has rights, and this does not change as we get older. Knowing your rights can help prevent abuse, because you know how you should be treated and that there are services and supports to help you exercise these rights.

Important rights that relate to abuse include:

- the right to be treated with dignity and respect
- the right to make your own decisions and choices
- the right to access the same types of protections as any other adult
- the right to live in a safe environment.

If you are unhappy with your living situation or the care you're receiving – whether at home or in a care facility – contact an appropriate support service. If it's difficult to get help yourself, tell someone you trust and ask them to call for you.

[More information on support services](#)

Call out ageism

There is sometimes the perception that older people are a burden on society and should make way for younger people or family members. For example, older people can be excluded from decision making or pressured to hand over their finances or assets to younger family members. These attitudes and actions can infringe on an older person's rights.

Ageism and discrimination against older people may be conscious or unintentional, but it's unacceptable in any form. It's important to call it out if you ever experience it and to seek help if you feel ageist behaviour is affecting your rights.

Read more about ageism

“Ageism is stereotyping, discrimination and mistreatment based solely upon age. When directed towards older people, it comes from negative attitudes and beliefs about what it means to be older.”
EveryAGE Counts.

[More Information](#)



Control your own finances

If you are informed and aware about your own finances and legal affairs, people are less likely to take advantage of you.

Although it's normal to turn to family members to help manage finances as you age, you should have the final say and control. If it's possible, get your financial advice from qualified and independent professionals, and always consider the long-term consequences of any financial decisions. Remember to document important decisions, including loans or gifts to family members, and don't be afraid to ask for more information if you're unsure.

If you can't afford professional advice, keep as many trusted people as possible informed about your financial matters. That way, no one person can influence you too much or pressure you into making decisions that haven't been properly thought through.

Protecting yourself from financial abuse

Steps you can take to keep your money and property safe.

More Information



Access services designed for seniors

Getting older is a new experience for everyone – and you are not alone in facing its joys and challenges. There are many services designed for older people to help you remain active in your community and able to do the things that are important to you.

Some of the services available include mental and physical health support, social connections, financial counselling and assistance with daily living activities.

Accessing services designed for older people can help prevent abuse by helping you maintain your independence, equipping you with information, and showing you where to find help when you need it.

Increase your online confidence and skills

In an increasingly online world, many older Australians find it difficult to keep up with technology, and they can feel isolated as a result. [Be Connected](#) is a free Australian Government initiative aimed at increasing the confidence, skills and online safety of older people. The website provides interactive learning activities, training courses and 'how-to' videos. You can learn how to spot scams, shop and bank online, and stay connected to family and friends. Connecting with your community and the wider world will do much to improve your quality of life.



Planning for the future

It can sometimes be challenging to think about your future and how things might change with your health, relationships, income and living arrangements as you get older. But thinking through the different possibilities and putting in place some arrangements and safety nets can help prevent future heartache and confusion.

Careful planning can also help prevent elder abuse – it gives you the opportunity to review what is important to you, appoint trusted people to help you, and understand your rights more. Taking the time to think about your future can protect you and save you from having to make uninformed decisions under pressure.

The future planning steps you can take include:

- deciding who will manage your financial decisions if you couldn't manage them yourself
- appointing a guardian or attorney to make your health and lifestyle decisions if you were no longer able to make them
- preparing a will, so people know how to carry out your wishes after you die
- creating legally binding documents for loans or property arrangements within the family
- documenting family living and care arrangements in a family agreement
- creating a safety plan.

Future planning

Find out more about Powers of Attorney, Advance Care Directives, guardianships, family agreements, wills and funerals.

More Information



Safeguard your financial decisions

A Power of Attorney is a legal document that appoints a person or trustee organisation to manage your financial decisions if you aren't able to manage them yourself. (In the Northern Territory, this document may be called an Advance Personal Plan.)

You can appoint someone to begin managing your affairs while you are still able to make your own decisions, or you can appoint someone to look after your affairs if you lose capacity.

[More information on Powers of Attorney in your state or territory](#)

Protect your personal decisions

Documents such as an Enduring Guardian allow you to appoint someone to make personal and lifestyle decisions for you if you lose capacity. This can include decisions about accommodation, health care, medical treatment and more.

[More information on Guardianships in Australia](#)

Cover your health and medical decisions

An Advance Care Directive is a written document that includes instructions for the medical treatment you want to receive or limit in the event you lose the capacity to make decisions. Some states and territories use other documents for this safeguard, but the principle is the same: you choose who will make your health decisions if you need them to.

[More information on Advance Care Directives](#)

Prepare a will

A will is a legal document containing your instructions for who is to receive your assets when you die. These can include property, finances and personal belongings.

When you write a will, you will need to appoint an executor to carry out your wishes after you die. It is important to get independent legal advice when making or changing a will and to seek help if you feel pressure from anyone about your will.

[More information on wills](#)

Have legally binding documents

It's a good idea to have a formal, written agreement for all significant financial or property arrangements you make with family members. A formal agreement is a legally binding document that will protect everyone involved by setting out what will happen if something does go wrong with the arrangements. The process of creating it will also help you discuss and work through these possibilities, making them less likely to happen.

[More information on protecting your home](#)

Write family agreements

As you get older, you may find that living alone in your home is no longer working. You might have the opportunity to move in with one of your adult children and their family, or have a child or grandchild move in with you.

These living arrangements often work out well. But problems can arise if things happen that you didn't anticipate or there is a dispute or disagreement with other family members.

If you're considering living with your adult child, co-purchasing a property, or moving into a granny flat, think about setting up a formal family agreement. This will help you anticipate possible problems and decide in advance what to do if they eventuate.

[More information on family agreements](#)

Create safety plans

If you find yourself living with violence or abuse, you can seek help from support services or trusted friends and family. It may help if you have a plan for what you can do and where you can go in an emergency.

[More information on safety planning](#)

Planning for the future



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