

# HEALTHY

## Relationships

### Guidelines for Providers: Why and How We Should Ask

#### Why? Intimate Partner Violence is common and consequential



*Impacts of pregnancy-related IPV include later entry into prenatal care, low-birthweight babies, premature labor, fetal trauma, unhealthy maternal behaviors, and postnatal issues such as postpartum depression and breastfeeding difficulties (3)*

- On average > 3 women a day are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States. (1)
- Nearly 1 in 4 women in the United States reports experiencing violence by a current or former partner at some point in her life. (2)
- Approximately 1 in 3 adolescent girls in the US is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner (2)
- 1 in 6 abused women is first abused during pregnancy (3)

#### Why? Differing Norms.

*Individuals may have differing norms for what constitutes a healthy relationship. Some people who may be in abusive situations may not identify themselves as a victims of abuse.*



- Asking open ended and in depth questions about interpersonal relationships encourage patients to self reflect without labeling or stigmatizing.
- Approaching the conversation with non-judgmental language, avoiding assumptions, and emphasizing genuine concern for patients facilitates communication.
- Asking the standard question "Do you feel safe at home?" does not adequately screen patients.

## How? Asking is key.



*Time is at a premium in patient provider relationships, but asking about intimate partner violence and healthy relationships is a brief and crucial interaction.*

- It doesn't take long:
  - If answer about IPV is no: 10 seconds
  - If answer is yes but abuse occurred in distant past: 2 minutes
  - If answer is yes and abuse is current: 12 minutes (5)
- Screening about IPV annually in reproductively aged women is a Grade B USPSTF recommendation (4)
- Don't be discouraged if patients don't disclose the first time they meet you. Trust, compassion, and longitudinal relationships encourage disclosure. (5)

## How? Providing Resources

*Feeling uncertain how to help can be a barrier to providers asking about IPV. Conducting a safety assessment for warning signs of escalating abuse, making a safety plan, and providing resources are important steps.*



### Safety Assessment:

- Is the abusive behavior increasing in frequency? In intensity?
- Are there guns in the house?
- Has your partner ever threatened to kill you?
- Does the partner use substances?
- Is the patient pregnant?
- Has your partner ever tried to strangle you?

Safety Plan: Brainstorm emergency contacts and an exit plan with your patient.

Resources: See patient handout for national and Georgia specific resources.

### References:

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# PEACE for MOMS

providing peace of mind for you and for your patient