

Non-lethal Strangulation in Domestic and Family Violence Health Response flowchart

Non-lethal strangulation in domestic and family violence (DFV)

- Is a significant indicator of a dangerous escalation in violence
- Is a risk factor for domestic homicide
- Has cumulative health impacts
- May cause serious injuries to the structures in the neck that are not visible to the eye, and for which there may be delayed and/or generalised symptoms

ASK

If you know/suspect a client has experienced domestic violence, ask them directly - *Has your partner tried to strangle/choke/suffocate you? If so, how many times?*

Evidence shows that in most cases of strangulation there are few or no external signs of injury.

CHECK

for signs and symptoms of strangulation, and key indicators for seriousness.

SIGNS

Red eyes, petechiae in eyes, petechiae on skin on or above the neck, neck swelling or bruising, ligature marks on neck, droopy eyelid or face, tongue injury, lip injury, poor coordination, confusion

SYMPTOMS

Neck pain, jaw pain, sore throat, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, vision changes, hearing changes, tinnitus, light headedness, headache, muscle weakness, voice changes, memory loss

KEY INDICATORS FOR SERIOUSNESS:

Client reports:
 1. Loss of consciousness;
 2. Loss of bowel &/or bladder control;
 3. Difficulty breathing &/or developed a cough &/or changes to voice;
 4. Thought she would die

USE CLINICAL JUDGEMENT AND CONSULT

to assess the need for further clinical tests/treatment

INFORM & REFER

Inform the client of the risks, symptoms, and possible health outcomes. Ask if the client would like to make a report to the police, and/or if she would like a referral to a specialist support worker.

HHS Social Worker PH: _____.

Specialist DFV Service PH: _____.

Please refer to the DFV Information Sharing Flowchart for Health Workers to guide your approach to sharing and requesting information.

DOCUMENT

client's reported experiences of non-lethal strangulation, signs and symptoms, treatment, and referrals.

Strangulation in DFV is a standalone criminal offence in Queensland. You are not required to report the crime to the police, but health records may be subpoenaed.