

ASKING ABOUT DV

- When dental hygienist's routinely ask about domestic violence, they are successfully fulfilling a major part of the intervention.
- Screening sends the message that battering is wrong and is a health care issue
- You can normalize domestic violence by including it among other safety questions (for example: the use of seat belts). You can say that you routinely ask all your patients about domestic violence.
- Making the question a normal part of the history taking helps dental hygienist's reduce their own and patients' discomfort with screening for domestic violence.

Be sure you are in a private, confidential setting, using non-judgmental tones and language. Family members should never be used as translators. Dental hygienists need to develop their own way of asking patients about abuse. "How are things at home?" is a standard screening question that can be embedded in other questions on safety and used as an opening to more specific questions about abuse.

Examples of how to ask about DV...

- **The next questions are about safety. Do you remember to wear seat belts? Is there anything particularly stressful going on now? How are things at home?**
- **Domestic violence can be a problem in many people's lives, so I now ask every patient I see about safety in their relationships.**
- **I see patients in my practice who are being hurt or threatened by someone they love. Is this happening to you? Has this ever happened to you?**

Adding one question about domestic violence to the routine health assessment is an important first step in improving health care for victims and for teaching people that partner abuse is a public health problem.