

What To Do If You Have Been Sexually Assaulted



HELP FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

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PROJECT VIDEOS

How to Report a Crime When You Have a Communication Disability

How to Report a Crime to Police

What to do if You Have Been Sexually Assaulted

Being a Witness and Testifying in Court

How to Write Your Victim Impact Statement

What Happens When You Go to Court

What Happens When You Report Being a Victim of a Crime (Sign Language Series Videos)

PROJECT HELP SHEETS

How to Report a Crime to Police

What to do if You Have Been Sexually Assaulted

Going to Court and Being a Witness

How to Write Your Victim Impact Statement

ORIGINAL PROJECT ILLUSTRATIONS

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Many people who have been sexually assaulted are more hurt than they think. You can have injuries inside your body that you can't see.

It may be hard for you to make any decisions after a sexual assault, like whether or not to go to the hospital. Call a friend or family member to go to the hospital with you to support you.

Don't Have a Bath or Shower

It may be hard and upsetting for you, but it's best to go to the hospital without washing yourself, brushing your teeth or changing your clothes. Washing can destroy evidence like hair or body fluids from the person who attacked you.

But, even if you do wash or change your clothes, go to the hospital.



What Happens at the Hospital?

The hospital is scary to many people. You may feel unsafe and afraid with the doctor or nurse, especially because you are upset from the sexual assault. You can have a friend, family member or a Victim Services Worker with you to help you feel safe.



You'll be taken to a private examination room as soon as possible after you get to the hospital. You may have to wait if the emergency room is busy or if the hospital is waiting for a special nurse examiner to come and help you.

It's your right to ask for a female doctor or male doctor if it makes you more comfortable.

Nothing Happens Without Your Permission

You're in charge of all parts of the hospital examination and treatments. Doctors and nurses will give you choices about each part along the way.

Your consent, which means your agreement or permission, is needed before anything is done. You can say "yes" or "no" to each one. You can decide not to consent to any of the tests or treatments doctors want to give you.



Do You Want to Report the Sexual Assault to Police?

A doctor will ask you if you want to report the sexual assault to the police. Many people who've been sexually assaulted don't want to talk to the police right away, but sometimes they change their minds later. It will be much hard-

er for police to catch the person who hurt you if they don't have evidence. So, if you choose to have the medical examination at the hospital, there will be evidence if it's needed later.

You'll be given a special medical examination if you want to report the sexual assault. Any evidence the doctor takes will be given to the police if you consent.



You Choose the Kind of Examination You Get

You can:

- ✓ Just talk with a doctor or nurse about your injuries
- ✓ Get some medical care, like treatment for sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, but without a physical examination inside your body
- ✓ Get full medical care including a physical examination inside and outside your body
- ✓ Let doctors gather physical evidence for police with a medical examination.

You can take a break or stop the examination any time you don't want to keep going. The nurse or doctor examining you knows that you've had a very bad experience.

If You Choose Only Medical Care

When you ask for medical care the doctor or nurse will ask you questions about the sexual assault. Some questions may make you feel uncomfortable or upset, but they're only asking to help with your medical care. You can ask them questions too.

The doctor or nurse will ask you about:

- ✓ Your medical history like any medical problems you have now or medicine you're taking
- ✓ If you are a woman, your menstrual history
- ✓ Your recent sexual history, if you use birth control pills, or when you last had sex with someone you wanted to.
- ✓ If you've been pregnant before or had any sexually transmitted infections

And the doctor or nurse will need details about the sexual assault like:

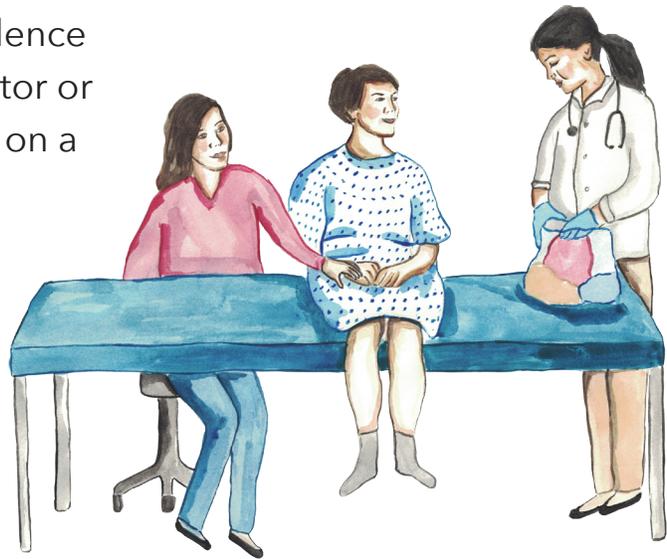
- ✓ Where in your body were you assaulted?
- ✓ Did the person use a condom?
- ✓ Were you drugged?
- ✓ Did you change clothes or wash yourself after?



If You Choose a Medical Examination

A medical examination to gather evidence for police can take a long time. A doctor or nurse will ask you to undress and put on a hospital gown.

The doctor or nurse may collect your clothes as evidence, if you're wearing the same clothes you had on when the sexual assault happened. Your clothes will probably not be given back because the testing will damage them.



The doctor or nurse will pay special attention to any physical injuries like bruises, cuts and broken fingernails.

A medical examination will be done if you give your consent.

Some examples of the evidence that may be taken are:

- ✓ A sample of fluids from your vagina or other parts of your body
- ✓ Your pubic hair may be combed and saved along with any loose hairs that may have come from the person who assaulted you
- ✓ A saliva sample
- ✓ A blood sample
- ✓ Samples from under your fingernails. Skin or blood from the person who assaulted you may be found there.
- ✓ Tests of your clothes

- ✓ A drug test, if you think you were drugged
- ✓ A pregnancy test

Police may want to take photos of you at the police station or in the emergency room to show your injuries. You need to give permission for them to take these photos. You can say "no."

Remember, all medical staff are there to treat you and help you.



For More Support

Please see the website of the BC Woman's Hospital + Health Centre at <http://www.bcwomens.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/sexual-assault-service-resources>.

Do You Need a Communication Intermediary?

Communication Disabilities Access Canada has a Canada-wide list of communication intermediaries. See their list at: <http://www.access-to-justice.org/>