

Sexual Assault of Women

What is sexual assault?

It is when you are forced to have any type of sexual contact that you do not want or without your consent. Another word for sexual assault is rape. It can range from being touched to being forced into sex. You can be hurt or killed during a sexual assault. Many people get cuts, bruises, or broken bones. People can get pregnant or get sexually transmitted infections after a sexual assault.

Sexual assault is a serious crime. It is a crime even if you know the attacker. It is a crime even if you are drinking, taking or given drugs, or are unconscious. It is a crime no matter what you are wearing or saying. It is a crime even if you don't fight back.

What is consent?

It is when you say "yes" to something without being forced to. You are allowed to change your mind. Just because you said "yes" to something before doesn't mean you will say "yes" now or in the future. You cannot give consent if you are unconscious or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can be sexually assaulted. Women are more likely to be sexually assaulted than men. Teenagers, older adults, people with disabilities, and people who

identify as lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and queer are more likely to be sexually assaulted.

What should I do if I have been sexually assaulted?

You should go to a safe place and get help. For example, go to the emergency room, call your doctor, or talk to the police. A doctor or nurse will talk to you about what happened. They will treat any injuries and give you medicine to prevent pregnancy and infection. They will collect evidence from your body (e.g., hair, saliva, semen) that can be used in court against the person who assaulted you.

Many people who have been assaulted are scared afterward and can have nightmares or trouble trusting people. They also may have pain every day. It is important to see your family doctor after an assault, because they know your medical history and will help you watch for long-term effects of the assault. It also can be helpful to see a counselor or go to a support group for people who have been assaulted.

How can I prevent it?

Sexual assault is not your fault. It doesn't matter what you wear, say, or have done in the past. You do not deserve to be sexually assaulted. You can be safe by making good choices about what you do and where you go. Be aware of your surroundings. Do not drink

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <https://familydoctor.org>.

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more than two or three alcoholic drinks at a time or use drugs. If you don't feel safe in a certain place or with certain people, you should leave.

If you see someone else being assaulted or who is in trouble, call 911. As a witness, it is just as important for you to act. By doing so, you can help prevent sexual assault.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

American Academy of Family Physicians

<https://familydoctor.org/rape/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/index.html>

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network
<https://www.rainn.org>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office on Women's Health
<https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/sexual-assault-and-rape/sexual-assault>

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