

If you've been raped

If you have been sexually assaulted recently or some time ago, you may be experiencing a wide range of feelings, from shock, fear, disbelief, recurring memories, outrage, confusion, sadness, despair, and anger. Please do not lose hope. All of your feelings are valid. You did not deserve this and the offender is the only person who should be blamed. There are many who can be of help to you now. To contact your local rape crisis center, please see Crisis Centers. Below are some of the options that you have. Please read them all so that you keep open as many options as possible, especially if the assault has just happened.

Emergencies

If you have recently been assaulted, your safety must come first. Please call 911 if you are in immediate danger. Also, do not hesitate to seek medical care if you are injured. Rape crisis center staff can also help you with a safety plan if the offender is someone you live with or work with.

Advice and Emotional Support

Contact friends and family you trust. Although they may not always understand how you feel, they know you the best and care about you. For free, confidential help and support with questions you can also contact your local rape crisis center (see Crisis Centers). Every question you have is valid and important. They can also provide assistance at the hospital, at the police station or court, and with counseling if you wish. Whether the assault occurred today or years ago, rape crisis center services are for anyone who has experienced a sexual assault.

Police Investigations

You may choose to call the police to have the offender arrested and charged with a crime. If you do, a medical exam may be taken to preserve evidence of the assault (sometimes called a "rape kit"). Police investigators may be able to take evidence from your clothing and body to prove the offender committed the crime. A nurse examiner will look for injuries related to the assault, proof that sexual activity occurred, and DNA from the offender on the victim's clothing and/or body. Therefore, please do not eat, urinate, shower, bathe, douche, or brush your hair in order to preserve any evidence that can be used against the offender. Investigators will also need all of the clothing that you were wearing at the time of the assault, so please do not change clothes or wash any of the clothes that you were wearing (and bring a change of clothes with you). The cost of the exam is generally covered by state funds. Note that the offender may also be medically examined for evidence.

A medical exam can be a powerful tool to put the offender behind bars, but it can also be very difficult emotionally to be medically examined after an assault. Most rape crisis centers have trained advocates that can stay with you at the hospital to support you. If you would like, call for a rape crisis center advocate or ask law enforcement or hospital staff to call the rape crisis center for you, so that an advocate can be with you as support.

Medical Care

Some medical concerns may not be immediately apparent, such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), internal injuries and pregnancy. Even if you do not wish to have a doctor or nurse collect evidence for an investigation, please obtain a medical exam to protect yourself as soon as possible from further physical harm. Some medications, such as the "morning after pill" for pregnancy and antibiotics for STDs are most effective when administered as soon as possible. Medical care may also preserve evidence of the assault, should you wish to pursue criminal charges immediately or in the future.

Remember that you are an important person, deserving of the best treatment possible. Let those you seek help from, whether they are rape crisis center advocates, medical staff, and/or law enforcement investigators work for you.