
Treating Sexual Assault

After a sexual assault, it's normal to feel angry, afraid, and even ashamed. But try not to let these feelings keep you from getting medical and psychological care. Medical treatment can help you recover physically as well as emotionally.

Many communities' hospital emergency rooms and special clinics have staff who are specifically trained to treat rape and sexual assault victims. Hospital staff or police will help you with free support resources such as:

- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) at www.rainn.org 800-656-HOPE (800-656-4673). RAINN is confidential and available 24/7.
- VictimConnect Resource Center at www.victimconnect.org 855-4VICTIM (855-484-2846). Call, text, and an online chat option are available.

What to expect in the emergency room (ER)

- Sexually transmitted infections. Sexual assault can place you at risk for STIs. These include gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, and viral hepatitis (hepatitis B or C). You may choose to be treated for some of these diseases right away. Or you may decide to wait for your test results.
- HIV. You have a very slight risk of getting HIV from a sexual assault. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. You have the option of getting medicines to help protect against the virus.
- Pregnancy. If pregnancy is a possibility, you may choose a simple treatment to prevent getting pregnant. Your healthcare provider can discuss other options with you.
- Date rape drugs. You can also ask the hospital or clinic to test your urine for date rape drugs, such as Rohypnol or GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyric acid). These drugs pass through your body quickly. So if too much time has passed when you get to the hospital, the drugs may not be found.

Follow-up care

Be sure to visit your healthcare provider a week or two after the assault. It may still be very difficult for you to talk about what happened. Consider bringing a trusted friend to the appointment. If you have difficulty talking about the assault, this person can help. You'll get the results from tests taken in the ER. Your healthcare provider can help you understand the test results. They can also help you find services and groups for sexual assault survivors. It's very important to care for your emotional and psychological well-being after a sexual assault. Visiting a rape crisis center, counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist can help.