

ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT

What is sexual assault?

Sexual assault and sexual abuse are any type of unwanted sexual contact. Everyone has the right to decide what they do or don't want to do sexually. Not all sexual assaults are violent "attacks."

Forcing or pressuring someone to do something they don't want to do or don't consent to is sexual assault.

Some examples of sexual assault and abuse are:

- Unwanted kissing or touching
- Unwanted rough or violent sexual activity
- Rape or attempted rape
- Keeping someone from protecting themselves from unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Sexual contact with someone who is very drunk, drugged, unconscious or is otherwise unable to give a clear and informed yes or no
- Threatening or pressuring someone into unwanted sexual activity

It is important to keep in mind that:

- Most victims of sexual assault know the assaulter
- Both men and women can be the victims of sexual assault
- Both men and women can be the perpetrators of sexual assault
- Sexual assault can occur in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships
- Sexual assault can occur between two people who have been sexual with each other before, including people who are married or dating

What do I do if I have been sexually assaulted?

If you have been sexually assaulted, first get to a safe place away from the attacker. From there, you can decide what you need most as you move forward. As scared and confused as you may be, it is important to remember that the assault was in no way your fault. *You have options* as you decide what to do next:

You can contact a friend, family member, or someone else that you trust. Many people feel fear, guilt, anger, shame, and/or shock after they have been sexually assaulted; having someone there to support you as you deal with those emotions can make a really big difference. It may also be helpful to speak with a counselor, someone at a sexual assault hotline, or to join a support group.

You can report what happened to the police. If you do decide to report what happened to you, you will have a stronger case if you do not alter or destroy any evidence of the assault. This means do not shower, wash your hair or body, comb your hair, or change your clothes. If you are nervous about going to the police station, it might help to bring a friend with you. There may also be sexual assault advocates in your area who can help walk you through the process.

You can go to an emergency room or health clinic. It is very important for you to seek health care as soon as you can after being assaulted. You will be treated for any injuries and given medications to help prevent pregnancy and STIs.

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship...
free from violence and free from fear.