Sexual Assault, Rape

Sexual assault can be physical, verbal, visual or anything that forces a person to have unwanted sexual contact. You are being sexually abused if you are forced to have sexual contact of any kind (vaginal, oral, or anal). It is called rape if penetration has occurred. Rape is a form of sexual assault and is forced on you. Sexual assault and rape is never the victim's fault.

The physical dangers of rape include catching a sexually transmitted infection (STI), pregnancy or injury. Your caregiver or emergency room doctor may recommend a number of tests to be done after a sexual assault or rape. A rape kit will collect evidence and check for infection and injury. You may be treated for an infection even if no signs of one are present. This may also be true if tests and cultures for disease are negative. Emergency contraceptive medications are also available to help prevent pregnancy, if this is desired. All of these options can be discussed with your caregiver. A sexual assault is a traumatic event. Counseling is available.

STEPS TO TAKE IF A SEXUAL ASSAULT HAS HAPPENED

- Go to an area of safety as quickly as possible and call the police. This may include a shelter or staying with a friend. Stay away from the area where you have been attacked. Many times, sexual assaults are caused by a friend, relative or associate.
- **Do not** wash, shower, comb your hair (especially your pubic hair) or clean any part of your body.
- **Do not** change your clothes.
- **Do not** remove or touch anything in the area where you were assaulted.
- Go to an emergency room or your caregiver for a complete physical exam. Get the necessary tests to protect yourself from disease or pregnancy.
- **If medications were given by your caregiver, take them as directed** for the full length of time prescribed. If you have come in contact with a sexual infection, find out if you are to be tested again. If your caregiver is concerned about the HIV/AIDS virus, you may be required to have continued testing for several months. Make sure you know how to get test results. It is **your responsibility** to get the results of all testing done.
- File the correct papers with authorities. This is important in all assaults even if it has occurred in a family or by a friend.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Carry mace or pepper spray for protection against an attacker.
- **Do not** try to fight off an attacker if he has a gun or knife.
- Be aware of your surroundings, what is happening around you and who might be out there.
- Be assertive, trust your instincts and walk with confidence and direction.
- Always lock your doors and windows.
- **Do not** let anyone enter you house who you do not know.
- Get door safety restraints and always use them.
- Get a security system that has a siren if you are able.
- Protect your house and car keys. Do not lend them out. Do not put your name and address on them. If you lose them, get your locks changed.
- Always lock your car and have your key ready to open the door before approaching the car.
- Park in a well lit and busy area.
- Keep your car serviced. Always have at least a half tank of gas in it.
- Drive in lighted and frequently traveled streets.
- **Do not** go into isolated areas like open garages, empty offices, building and laundry rooms alone.
- **Do not** walk or jog alone, especially when dark.
- **Do not** hitchhike, ever!
- If your car breaks down, call the police for help on your cell phone, put the hood up on your car, and a

HELP sign on your front and back windows.

- If you are being followed, go to a busy store or to someone's house and call for help.
- If you are stopped by a police officer, especially in an unmarked police car, keep your door locked. Do not put your window down all the way. Ask them to show you identification first.
- Be aware of "date rape drugs" that can be placed in a drink when not looking and can make you unable to fight off an assault. They usually cause memory loss.

If you know someone who has been sexually abused or raped, take them to a hospital, to the police or call your local emergency phone number for help.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have new problems because of your injuries.
- You have problems that may be because of the medicine you are taking. These problems may include rash, itching, swelling, or trouble breathing.
- You develop belly (*abdominal*) pain, feeling sick to your stomach (*nausea*) or vomiting. You begin to run a temperature of 100º F (37.8º C) or higher.
- You need supportive care or referral to a rape crisis center. These are centers with trained personnel who can help you get through this ordeal.
- You have abnormal vaginal bleeding.
- You have abnormal vaginal discharge.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- **YOU HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ASSULTED OR RAPED.**
- You are afraid of being threatened, beaten, or abused. **Call your local emergency phone number** for help.
- You receive new injuries related to abuse.

For more information on sexual assault and rape call the National Women's Health Information Center at 1-800-994-9662.

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