Sexual Assault, Child

Your child has been the victim of sexual assault. If you know that your child is being abused, it is important to **get them to a place of safety**. Abuse happens if your child is forced into activities without concern for their well being or rights. A child is sexually abused if they have been forced to have sexual contact of any kind (vaginal, oral, or anal). **It is up to you to protect your child.** If this assault has been caused by a family member or friend, it is still necessary to overcome the guilt you may feel and take the needed steps to prevent it from happening again.

The physical dangers of sexual assault include catching a sexually transmitted disease. Another concern is that of pregnancy. Your caregiver may recommend a number of tests that should be done following a sexual assault. Your child may be treated for an infection even if no signs are present. This may also be true even if tests and cultures for disease do not show signs of infection. 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 very traumatic event. Most children will need counseling to help them cope with this.

STEPS TO TAKE IF A SEXUAL ASSAULT HAS HAPPENED

- Take your child to an area of safety. This may include a shelter or staying with a friend. Stay away from the area where your child was attacked. A large percentage of sexual assaults are carried out by a friend, relative or associate. **It is up to you to protect your child.**
- **If medications were given by your caregiver, give them as directed** for the full length of time prescribed. If your child has come in contact with a sexual disease, find out if they are to be tested again. If your caregiver is concerned about the HIV/AIDS virus, they may require your child to have continued testing for several months. Make sure you know how to obtain test results. It is **your responsibility** to obtain the results of all testing done. Do not assume everything is OK if you do not hear from your caregiver.
- File appropriate papers with authorities. This is important in all assaults, even if it has been done by a family member or friend.
- Only give your child over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There are new problems because of injuries.
- Your child seems to have problems that may be because of the medicine they are taking (such as rash, itching, swelling, or trouble breathing).
- There is *abdominal* (belly) pain, *nausea* (feeling sick to your stomach), vomiting, or your child begins to run a temperature.
- Your child may need supportive care or referral to a rape crisis center. These are centers with trained personnel who can help your child and you get through this ordeal.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or your child are afraid of being threatened, beaten, or abused; or **call 911 or 0 (operator)** for help.
- You or your child receive new injuries related to abuse.

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