

Information for people who have been sexually assaulted and their carers

If you have been a victim of sexual violence, you may experience a wide range of emotions and reactions that can be very upsetting. These are quite normal for someone who has been through such a traumatic experience. You may feel all or some of them:

- Shock and numbness
- Shame and humiliation
- Distress
- Fear
- Anger
- Guilt and self-blame
- Helplessness

Reporting to the police:

The earlier this is done the better in terms of gathering evidence. You can do this by phoning the police or going to the local station. If you want to report to the police, don't wash or clean your teeth and keep the clothes you were wearing. If you were using a panty liner or sanitary towel at the time of the attack you should also keep this as it might provide evidence. If you have a tampon in this needs to remain in place until you are examined. Keep an early urine sample if you think you may have been drugged.

Whether you report to the police or not, you should think about your medical and psychological needs:

If you are worried about pregnancy you need to get hold of emergency contraception within 72 hours, when it is most effective. This is available from your GP, family planning clinic, Accident & Emergency department or over the counter (at a price) from selected pharmacies.

You may want to have a check for sexually transmitted infections – this should be done 10 to 14 days after the assault at the local sexual health (GUM) clinic, your GP or family planning clinic.

Psychological needs:

Many people who have been sexually assaulted have difficulty in coping afterwards. You may have problems sleeping or experience nightmares. Mood swings are very common and you may find yourself getting angry or suddenly breaking down in tears. Concentrating on anything can be difficult.

It can help to talk to friends or family or you may feel you need professional help from a counsellor or psychologist. Your GP may be able to help by referring you for counselling or by prescribing medication to get you over the initial period.

What you can do to help someone who has been sexually assaulted:

- Provide a safe environment
- Be supportive and non-judgemental

- Be willing to listen but do not pressure the victim to talk
- Present any options clearly. Encourage them to take control and make decisions and support them in those decisions
- Appearances can be deceptive. Bear in mind that someone who has been sexually assaulted may appear very calm because they are in shock.

Support:

Victim Support:

To find your local branch ring the national office on 020 7735 9166

Helpline: 0845 3030 900

www.victimsupport.org

Refuge:

For domestic violence

Helpline: 0808 080 9999

www.refuge.org.uk

Samaritans:

Helpline: 0845 790 9090

www.samaritans.org

Survivors:

For men and boys

Helpline: 0845 122 1201 (Tuesday, Thursday 7-10pm)

www.survivorsuk.org

Rights of Women:

For legal advice

Sexual violence legal advice line: 020 7251 8887 (Mon 11-1pm; Tues 10-12)

www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

Home Office

For details of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCS)

www.homeoffice.gov.org

Rape Crisis Centres

www.rapecrisis.org.uk has details of organisations around the UK