



What to do if you are raped!

GET MEDICAL HELP - you may be injured or have contracted a venereal disease or be pregnant. It is essential to see a doctor as soon as possible.

PRESERVE EVIDENCE

Don't wash yourself before seeing the doctor. Collect your clothes as well as any other evidence in a paper bag.

Tell a friend or the police about the incident as soon as possible.

GET COUNSELLING

If you need help in understanding your feelings and emotions about the rape, or if you just need someone to talk to, call Family Life Association. We can also give you free legal advice.

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Introduction

Rape is becoming an increasingly common crime. We are all worried about it happening to someone we know. It might even be you. No one is immune.

This booklet is designed to help provide useful information to the rape victim, to those who want to help a victim and to all of us who want to know what to do in this situation.

Facts about sexual assault have often not been accurately reported in our society. People have grown up with false beliefs, many of which may have a negative effect on the victim.

Victims, whether they are women, men or children, should not feel they are responsible for this crime, when in fact they are the victims!

When people do not recognize the offender as being responsible for his behaviour and blame the victim, many cases will go unreported.

Unless we all take responsibility for this horrendous crime, and change our beliefs, sexual assault will continue to be the fastest rising violent crime in the country and the most difficult to prosecute and convict.

Did you know?

- * Sexual assault is a violent crime: research shows that men who rape, use sex as a weapon to dominate and have power over another person, not to satisfy sexual desire.
- * Not all rapes involve physical injury. Threats, intimidation and fear can cause a victim to submit. Black eyes and bruises are not the criteria for determining rape.
- * It is not true that a "good" woman would never submit. A woman who does not submit runs an extremely high risk of severe injury or death. A dead mother does her children no good and a maimed daughter brings her parents no joy. To expect a woman to resist is unrealistic.
- * Any woman can be the victim of rape. Whether a virgin or a prostitute, there is no woman who cannot be raped.
- * No woman's behaviour or dress gives a person the right to rape her.
- * Every woman has the right to refuse, at any time, the sexual advances of any man. No man has the right to have intercourse with you, without your consent.
- * If a woman consents to sexual caresses, she may still refuse sexual intercourse. She may withdraw her consent at any time before intercourse begins.

- * Penetration, not ejaculation, is the criterion for rape. There does not have to be any semen in the vagina to prove that rape has occurred.
- * In over 60% of rape cases, the victim and the rapist are friends, relatives or acquaintances.
- * Falsely reporting a rape is very uncommon. Statistics show that the number of false reports is at the same level as that of other crimes.
- * Rape is just as traumatic to a sexually active woman as to a virgin. It is the overwhelming fear of injury or death, the humiliation, the guilt and the feeling of total helplessness which cause the trauma to the rape victim. These emotions are experienced just as deeply by a sexually active woman as by a virgin.
- * 85% of the children who are sexually abused are molested by people they know well.
- * Statistics show that children do not lie or make up stories about being sexually abused.
- * If a man uses undue influence, particularly to a young girl, in order to induce her to submit - that is rape. A girl who submits because of threats and fear has not consented to intercourse.

- * There is no shame in having been raped. It is the rapist who has done an evil and violent act. The woman has been his victim, and should not feel ashamed.
- * Rapists choose their victims without regard to physical appearance. Females ages 2 years to 80 years have been victims of rape in Swaziland. Any woman, regardless of her appearance, age or social class can be the victim of rape.
- * Rape occurs in both urban and rural areas. Where you live is no protection against rape.
- * A large percentage of rapes occur in the victim's home or private residence. Staying at home won't protect you against rape.
- * Most rape victims fail to report the rape, therefore most rapists go free.

What is Rape?

Rape is sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent.

Rape does not necessarily involve the use of physical force or of physical resistance on the part of the woman. The essence of the crime is that the woman did not consent.

A sleeping woman cannot consent.

An extremely intoxicated woman, if she is incapable of realizing what she is doing, cannot consent.

A girl under 12 years old is by law incapable of consenting.

Intercourse with any woman who does not consent is rape.

Any woman can be raped. Nothing that a woman has done gives any man the right to have intercourse with her without her consent.

The law generally does not recognize that a husband can rape his wife. However, he may be convicted of assault if he forces her to submit to intercourse.

Rape is a form of sexual assault. Other kinds of sexual assault are indecent assault, statutory rape and incest. These are all against the law.

Any form of sexual assault is a terrifying and often brutal crime. It violates a person's innermost physical and psychological well-being.

Sexual assault can and does happen to anyone: young and old, male and female, married or single, urban or rural.

NO ONE IS IMMUNE.

ATTEMPTED RAPE is when someone attempts to rape a woman but does not complete the act. This is still a crime and should be reported.

STATUTORY RAPE is intercourse with a girl under 16 or with an imbecile. This is a crime, even if the woman actually consents.

INDECENT ASSAULT is any assault of an indecent character. An assault is any unlawful, unconsented touching. For instance, if a man touches a woman in private places without her consent, this would be indecent assault. It could not be rape because there was no sexual intercourse, but it is still a crime.

A man may also be the victim of indecent assault, as when one man attempts to have sex with another without his consent.

A husband can be convicted of indecent assault of his wife if he forces her to have sexual intercourse against her will.

ALL SEXUAL ASSAULTS ARE CRIMINAL.

Every man and woman has the right to decide when, where and with whom to have sex. No one has the right to force another human being to submit to sexual advances.

How does a woman react to rape ?

FEAR. She has been violated, abused and her life has been threatened. She will probably be feeling extremely vulnerable.

Do not contribute to vulnerability by being rough and cold.

ANGER. Much of the anger may be a result of the victim's feeling of loss of strength and loss of control over her own life. The anger may be directed toward the rapist, a doctor, the police, or anyone else, including herself.

GUILT. Most rape victims experience feelings of guilt. They wonder if they could have done something to get away from the rapist. They may blame themselves for walking alone at night, leaving a door or window unlatched. Some may wonder if they did something to encourage the rapist. These feelings are normal and must be taken seriously.

SHAME. The rapist has destroyed her self-respect, has made her do things that she detests, and has made her feel dirty and disgusting. That she submitted at all, even at knife-point, may make her feel ashamed. You must try to help her see that she has been violated --- the rape was an attack and not her choice. She need not feel shame. She needs to help to restore her dignity and self-respect.

LOSS OF CONTROL OVER HER OWN LIFE. Since she had to give in because of fear or because the rapist was physically stronger, she may no longer feel sure of her ability to control her life. Even little decisions like whether or what to eat become major issues.

Help her through this stage but do not take over. You should not contribute to her feelings of powerlessness by making decisions for her.

Possible long-term effects of rape:

- * fear of sexual relations even with her husband or boyfriend.
- * fear of rejection by her husband, fiance or boyfriend, because she is now "soiled".
- * anxiety, shaking, nightmares, insomnia, weight loss or eating disorders.
- * fear of strange men.
- * fear of being alone.
- * confusion over whether to change her routine or life-style.
- * confusion over whom to tell about the incident.

At the Doctor's

The doctor will ask what happened to you. Since he wants to help you he will ask for many details:

- * If the man has threatened you with a weapon.
- * If he has forced himself into your vagina.

The doctor also wants to know:

- * When you had your last menstruation.
- * Were you using contraceptives, if so, which kind.
- * Before the rape, did you have a vaginal discharge or sores around the vagina.

The doctor will examine you:

- * First he will look at your clothing. It is important for him to know if your clothing was torn, and if you were covered with dirt. So do not wash yourself and change clothing after the rape. Don't hesitate to go to the doctor just as you are.
- * The doctor will look at your hands and arms for scratches and bruises, as well as at your breasts and back. He will feel your tummy to feel if all the organs are O.K.

- * The doctor will ask you to take off your panties. He will ask you to spread your legs to look if there is any damage to your vagina or anus. There he will gently insert an instrument into your vagina which will make it easy to see inside. With cotton-wool he will take some of the vaginal fluid and send it to a laboratory for examination for sperms and for diseases. After that he will feel inside to see if the womb is alright.
- * After the examination the doctor will give you tablets to prevent you from getting pregnant. If he does not give them to you, ask for these tablets.
- * The doctor will tell you if you have caught a venereal disease and will give you an injection or tablets to treat the disease.
- * If you are very upset, you can ask for some medicine to calm you down.

DON'T FORGET - if your next period is not in time, go back to the doctor immediately.

At the Police

If you want to prosecute the rapist, or if you need to have a pregnancy terminated, you must file a police report.

You don't have to go to the police station immediately, but it is best to go as soon as possible, while your memory is clear and evidence can still be found.

You may go to the station with a relative or friend.

You should bring your soiled clothing or any other evidence which will help the police in their investigation. It is important to wrap evidence in paper rather than plastic to preserve it.

You may ask to see a female police officer if you wish, and may not want to discuss the incident until a female officer arrives.

You are entitled to discuss the incident in private, tell the police officer if you prefer privacy.

You are not required to answer any questions which are not relevant to the crime.

The police will ask you to describe the incident as fully as possible. Try to remember every detail you can, and try not to avoid anything or change the truth because you are embarrassed. It is very important that you tell everything and that you tell only the truth.

The police will ask you if you reported the crime. It is important for the law that you report the incident to someone (it may be your friend, relative, mother, or anyone) as soon as possible after the rape.

If the police fail to ask you about something you consider important, volunteer the information. Any information at all may be useful.

If you later think of something you had forgotten, go back to the station to tell them the new information.

The police are there to help you. Try not to be afraid.

At the Trial

If the rapist is arrested you will be asked to testify at his trial. You are the most important witness, since usually there is no other witness to the actual rape. Your doctor may also testify as well as the policeman to whom you reported, any friends or relatives to whom you reported the rape, and the rapist himself.

You will have to describe the incident in detail for the judge and lawyers. Since the rape is a humiliating experience and you must discuss things which are normally very private, you may ask the judge and prosecutor to hold the hearing in private, without an audience.

The prosecutor is the first person who will ask you questions. You may ask him before the trial to tell you what questions he will ask.

He will ask:

- * if you can identify the accused as the man who raped you.
- * if you knew the accused before.
- * if you had ever had sex with the accused before.

- * if you reported the incident to anyone.
- * if you were hurt.
- * where the rape happened.
- * to describe the incident.

The next person to ask you questions will be the accused person's lawyer, or the accused person himself. He may ask you about your past sexual experiences, and will try to make the judge disbelieve your story. His questions may seem to you to be very harsh.

Never make up a story that you think the judge would like to hear. Always tell exactly the truth. If you don't know the answer to a question, then say you don't know. Never make up an answer.

The judge may also ask you some questions. Try to tell him everything you remember.

It is not easy to be a witness in a rape trial. However, it is very important that rape victims report the crime and prosecute the rapists so that we can protect our community from this horrible crime.

How can you help?

Rape is a very humiliating and frightening experience.

As someone who must deal with a woman who has survived rape - as a health worker, policeman, counsellor, relative or friend - it is crucial that your interaction with the rape victim be sensitive, kind and positive.

- * BE aware of the variety of emotions she is feeling.

- * ASSUME she is emotionally traumatised. Outward reactions of rape victims may vary from hysteria to calm and rational thinking. It is not unusual for the victim to seem calmer than her family and friends. Don't let this fool you. Her reaction may take place immediately, or several hours, days, or months later, but she will react to the experience.

Treat her gently and with sensitivity whatever her initial reaction to the rape.

Don't turn her away.

She may not look injured, but she undoubtedly is.

- * Give her privacy and respect. It is difficult for a victim to say: "I was raped". She may be embarrassed to discuss the

physical details of the assault. Our bodies have always been regarded as private. Your conversations with her should be private and serious. Don't ask questions merely to satisfy your own curiosity. Don't thoughtlessly announce to the waiting room, "Will the rape victim come this way please." Show her respect and empathy.

- * LISTEN in a way that shows you understand her feelings.
- * REMAIN calm no matter what happens - this will have a calming effect on the victim.
- * ENCOURAGE her to talk about the experience, what she is feeling, her fears and concerns in whatever way she wants.
- * DON'T PUSH her. Let her talk at her own speed.
- * ASSURE her that rape has happened to hundreds of others - she is not the only victim.
- * BE TACTFUL. Be careful to avoid emotionally charged words such as "rape" and "the accused".
- * ASSURE her that although the incident will disrupt her life in some ways, it will not last forever.
- * ASSURE her that her feelings of anger, guilt, fear, etc. are normal.

- * DISCOURAGE her from being alone.
She will need support at this time.
- * ENCOURAGE her to get counselling and tell her where she can go (Family Life Association).
- * ENCOURAGE her to get medical help and discuss with her what will happen at the doctor's. Be sure to tell her to ask for pregnancy protection and venereal disease protection.
- * ENCOURAGE her to report to the police as soon as possible.
- * ASSESS your own values. Do your personal, moral or religious beliefs bias your feelings about rape victims? Do you believe in your heart, that "she must have deserved it"? You must examine your own values, and if you are not able to approach rape in an unbiased manner, you should remove yourself from the position where you might encounter rape victims. Do not let yourself cause further damage to a woman who has already been brutalized.
- ****A rape victim needs to be treated in an almost childlike way. She needs to feel secure and protected from further hurts and abuses.

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