

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

If you are threatened with rape by either a stranger or an acquaintance, you will have to use your own best judgment about how to react. Some experts recommend that you physically resist an attack, while others believe this may antagonize the attacker more. You need to realize that preserving your life is of paramount importance and no matter what you do, you are NOT the guilty part.

1. As soon as you are out of the rape situation, find a safe place and someone you trust-someone who can provide emotional support and help identify courses of action and consequences of the actions. It is very difficult to think objectively when one is tremendously upset, so provide yourself this support.
2. Even if you are unsure about whether or not you want to file sexual assault charges, it is best to notify the proper authorities.
3. Obtain medical assistance immediately. You are strongly encouraged to have a medical examination for the collection of evidence should you decide to prosecute. Another important aspect of medical care after rape is the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. At the clinic or hospital, they will take any clothing, especially undergarments, that might provide evidence. Therefore, you probably will want to take a change of clothing with you to the hospital. It would be helpful for you to have a trusted friend who can accompany you to the hospital or clinic.
4. If you are sure that you do not want to go for a legal rape examination, at least go for a medical/gynecological examination to ensure whether or not further medical treatment is necessary.
5. Rape is a complex and painful experience requiring a combination of legal, medical, psychological, religious, family, and personal responses. It can disrupt a person's life in many ways. Some of these ways may not become apparent for days, weeks, months, or even years. Support groups and personal counseling have proven to be very helpful and can hasten your recovery. There is no need for you to go through the trauma of the aftermath of rape alone.

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