

Sexual Assault

Sexual assault involves forced sex on another person without them agreeing. Sexual assault is common and happens to men and women, boys and girls.

In Australia, **sexual assault is a crime**. Even if two people are married, forced sex is a crime.

For people who have been sexually assaulted, it is a major experience and they can have many difficulties afterwards. There is no right or wrong way to feel after experiencing a sexual assault. It may take a long time to recover and feel okay again. It is important to look after yourself and to get help if you need it.

Short Term Effects of Sexual Assault

You might ...

- feel alone, unsafe or afraid
- feel confused and can't think
- have sleeping problems and feel tired
- have nightmares
- feel sick and can't eat
- feel guilty and shame
- feel angry or sad
- think lots about what happened
- get body pain and headaches
- feel no one can be trusted
- feel shaky and nervous
- feel bad and dirty

Long Term Effects of Sexual Assault

You might ...

- always feel sad
- always think about what happened
- feel really angry
- feel unsafe and always watching for danger
- think "Did that really happen to me?"
- worry about your future
- stay away from people
- have really bad dreams
- feel alone and confused
- feel you want to hurt yourself
- want alcohol or drugs

Some tips on taking care of yourself

Do

- get medical help for any health problems
- spend time with people who care
- spend time with people you trust
- talk when you feel READY
- get some rest and relax
- do a little bit of exercise if you can

Don't

- drink alcohol or take drugs
- give up on the things you like
- stay away from family / friends who care
- keep things on your mind
- let bad feelings get to you
- take risks that will hurt you
- blame yourself

Taking care after a sexual assault

Actions you can take

- ▶ If you are injured, go to a hospital or doctor for treatment. This is important.
- ▶ It is your choice whether you want to report the sexual assault to Police or not. If you are unsure about what to do, you might want to talk it through with a worker at one of the services listed below. If you decide to report to police, contact the Police Sex Assault Squad (see the number below).
- ▶ If you think you might have a sexual infection or disease from the assault, you can go to a clinic to have tests done (see below).
- ▶ Some people find it helpful to go to counselling. Counselling involves talking to a caring, trained person who won't judge you, about your experience. You can ask to use an interpreter for counselling.

Services

- **SARC** (The Sexual Assault Resource Centre)- medical and counselling service following sexual assault **93401828**
- **ASeTTS** (Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors) - counselling and other support **9227 2700**
- **Multicultural Women's Advocacy Service**- support and advocacy for women from different cultures who experience violence in the home **9328 1200**
- **Multicultural Services Centre of WA**— counselling and other support **9328 2699**
- **Ishar** - counselling and support, medical services, domestic violence, sexual abuse and mental health information and support services for women of all cultures **9345 5335**
- **Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre**- support for people from different cultures **9345 5755**
- **Fremantle Multicultural Centre** – crisis accommodation, mental health access services and settlement programs for refugees and migrants **9336 8282**
- **Gosnells Women's Health Service** – counselling and health care for women of all cultures **9490 2258**
- **Police Sex Assault Squad**- to report a sexual assault **94281600**
131 444 (after 5pm)

The Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)

SARC offers free support to people (aged 13 years and older) who have been sexually assaulted as an adult or sexually abused as a child.

There are doctors who can see you straight after a sexual assault (up to 2 weeks after). They can give medicine to reduce the chance of pregnancy, test for sexual infections and collect evidence if you decide to report to Police.

Free counselling is also available and an interpreter can be arranged.

You can telephone SARC on **(08) 9340 1828** or **1800 199 888** (freecall from a landline)

Remember

- There are people you can talk to.
- You are not alone.
- The way you are feeling is normal.
- The assault was NOT your fault.
- You are not 'crazy'.
- You can feel healthy and good again.

