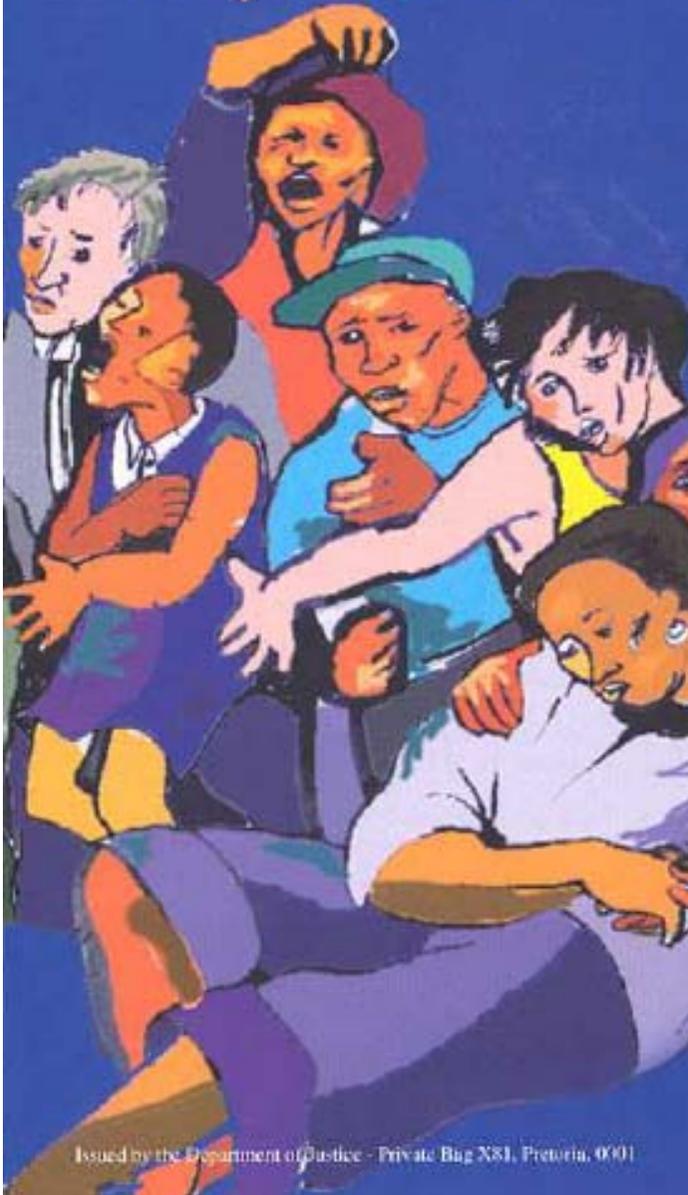


VICTIMS OF SEXUAL OFFENCES:

What you should know!



Issued by the Department of Justice - Private Bag 281, Pretoria, 0001

Women and men who have been sexually assaulted often feel scared and confused and angry. They do not know where to turn for help.

This pamphlet will provide you with practical support and information about:

- reporting the assault to the police
- the medical examination by the accredited health care practitioner
- the feelings you may have after being sexually assaulted
- where to get help and support.

THE POLICE

• If you report the sexual assault to the police, a police officer will need to take a statement from you. The statement may be taken as soon as you report it or after you have been medically examined by an accredited health care practitioner.

• When the police officer takes a statement from you, you will have to tell him or her exactly what happened. He or she will write down what you say. He or she will then ask you to read the statement once it is written, make any corrections and to sign it if you are satisfied. If it is not correct, you must insist that it be changed.

• You may ask a friend or family member to be with you when you give your statement, provided that that person is not a potential witness in a subsequent trial relating to your case.

• You are allowed to make a further statement at a later stage if you feel any important facts are not contained in your original statement.

• The police officer who takes your statement is usually not the same person who will investigate your case. The person who will investigate your case is called the Investigating Officer. The Investigating Officer may need a further detailed statement from you at a later stage.

• You are entitled to give your statement in your own language, but it may be translated into another language.

• You have a right to a copy of your statement. If you can't get one immediately, you can get it at a later stage.

• When you report the sexual assault to the police you will get a case number. You must keep it so you can give it to the detective, should you have questions about your case.

• It is important to tell the detective if you change your address or telephone number so that he or she can contact you when necessary.

• Your Investigating Officer should inform you of any developments in the case, for example:

- should a suspect be arrested; -if he is released on bail;
- request you to attend an identification parade if so required;
- when the trial will be; and
- when you may be required to give evidence in court about the sexual assault.

You may telephone your Investigating Officer should you have any questions about your case.

– Your Investigating Officer will investigate the case, gathering all relevant information. Once the case goes to court, your case will be represented by a lawyer from the State, called a prosecutor. You will be able to get information about your case from both the Investigating Officer and the prosecutor once the case has gone to court.

Police Station:

Investigating Officer:

Telephone number:

Case Reference number:

Date of reporting:

ACCREDITED HEALTH PRACTITIONER

- You will be medically examined by an accredited health care practitioner who will complete a medical report, which may be used later as evidence in the court case.
- After having been sexually assaulted, you may be concerned about the following:

PREGNANCY

- If necessary, the accredited health care practitioner will supply you with medication to prevent possible pregnancy (the morning after pill).
- However, if you should miss your next menstrual period and you are worried that you may be pregnant as a result of the sexual assault, you must without delay do one of the following:
 - visit your nearest day hospital, municipal clinic, or provincial hospital, or
 - contact the accredited health care practitioner's office where you were first examined, or
 - consult your private doctor, or
 - contact your Investigating Officer.

The necessary tests will be done and if you are pregnant, you may obtain an abortion should you want one.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

- Nearly all these diseases can be successfully treated with medication.
- Should you develop an abnormal discharge or vaginal irritation your doctor or clinic will supply you with treatment.
- It could take up to three weeks before certain sexually transmitted diseases (ulcers) develop.
- The accredited health care practitioner may give you treatment to stop you from getting these diseases from the sexual assault.

AIDS / HIV

- The chance of getting AIDS after one sexual assault is slight.
- Unfortunately there is always a possibility of getting AIDS, especially if you have been assaulted over a long period of time. This will understandably cause a great deal of concern for you.
- You must go to your doctor or clinic or ATICC for an AIDS test and counselling straight away and then again after another three months.
- It is very important to know that the reason the accredited health care practitioner examines you, is to collect evidence for the court case. Procedures differ from one health care facility to another. In some places the accredited health care practitioner may possibly not give you any treatment for pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. You must therefore go as soon as possible to a clinic or a hospital or your own doctor so that they can treat you.

Health care facility:

Accredited health care practitioner:

Date of examination:

Telephone number:

POSSIBLE FEELINGS AFTER BEING RAPED

- It is important to remember that there is always someone who can help you, like a friend, a family member, a rape counsellor, church or spiritual leader, psychologist or employer.
- There are a number of things you may feel after being sexually assaulted. Always remember that whatever you feel is understandable and that being sexually assaulted is never your fault. Every woman responds to sexual assault in a different way, depending on her own circumstances.

- You may feel dirty and want to wash yourself all of the time.
 - You may feel scared and afraid to go out after you have been sexually assaulted.
 - You may begin to abuse alcohol or drugs to help to forget the assault.
 - You may blame yourself for being sexually assaulted and therefore feel guilty
 - this is a normal reaction to sexual assault.
 - remember that it is not your fault.
 - You may want to continue your life as normal, and want to forget the sexual assault as soon as possible.
 - You may experience nightmares, problems eating or sleeping.
- You may cry a lot and struggle with problems in personal relationships.

NB: These are not unusual or unnatural responses but rather a collection of things that many people who have been sexually assaulted have experienced.

PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WHO CAN HELP YOU

- Social workers at your nearest clinic, hospital or municipality
- Your doctor
- School guidance teacher or psychologist
- Your church or spiritual leader
- Private psychologist
- Rape counsellor