



find the strength

Rape and sexual assault

Information
for men

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Coping after rape or sexual assault

Being raped or sexually assaulted is a shocking experience for anyone and the effects can last a long time. Male victims also have to deal with the fact that a lot of people wrongly think that only women are affected. Many men feel ashamed or embarrassed because of this, but it is estimated that around 1 in 20 men have been sexually assaulted at least once in their lifetime.

Everyone reacts differently to a bad experience like this and your feelings may change from day to day. The important thing is to be aware that you may be affected in many different ways, both mentally and physically.

It can be difficult to talk about what has happened. Most people do come to terms with their experience in time, especially if they get support and understanding. Friends and family can be very helpful. But many people find it easier to speak to someone they don't know, and who understands what they have been through.

A few facts

It is a myth that only strangers carry out sexual attacks. Often the victim knows their attacker – it may even be their partner or a close friend. Whoever the attacker was, the important thing to remember is that it is not your fault.

Men can be, and are, sexually assaulted by women. And crimes where men rape other men have little or nothing to do with sexuality. Being a victim of a crime such as this does not mean that the victim, or the attacker, is gay. Both straight and gay men commit and are the victims of this type of assault.

Some men are upset because they may have become physically aroused during the attack and worry about what this could mean. But if this has happened to you, you should remember that this is likely to have been a purely physical reaction, like a reflex, over which you may have no control.

How we can help

Victim Support is the independent national charity for people affected by crime. We offer help to 1.1 million people affected by crime every year, including thousands of victims of rape and sexual violence. We give information, practical help and emotional support to help people find the strength to carry on after crime.

Our services are confidential, free and available to everyone. We can help, regardless of whether you have told the police or anyone else about the attack.

Our specially-trained volunteers can visit you at home (if it's safe and if you want us to) or somewhere else if you prefer. If you don't want to see anyone face-to-face, you can also talk to us on the 'phone, either to your local office or to the national Victim Supportline on **08 08 16 89 111** (calls charged at local rate) or you can email us at **supportline@victimsupport.org.uk**

If you choose to report the attack, we can go to the police station with you. If you give evidence in court, our Witness Service can help you to cope with the experience. We can also give you information about compensation.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Even if you have no symptoms, a check up for STIs is a sensible precaution after a rape or sexual assault. You can get help and advice from your GP or practice nurse, family planning clinics or Brook Advisory Centres.

Any of these can refer you to a GUM (genito-urinary medicine) clinic where you can be tested. Or you can contact your nearest large hospital and ask for an appointment with the GUM clinic yourself.

You can choose to have an HIV test separately. This will usually happen at a GUM clinic and you will normally be offered counselling before the test. Your GP can arrange the test for you, but if you are worried about confidentiality you can go direct to the GUM clinic.

If you may have been exposed to HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), you should get medical advice quickly as there is medication which can prevent HIV from taking hold in some people – but only if it is taken quickly after infection. This treatment, called post exposure prophylaxis (PEP), may be available from your nearest GUM clinic or hospital A&E department. You can find out more about PEP on the Terrence Higgins Trust website (www.tht.org.uk).

For confidential advice about HIV, call the THT Direct helpline on 0845 12 21 200 (10am–10pm Monday to Friday, 12pm–6pm Saturday and Sunday), or the free 24-hour Sexual Healthline on 0800 567 123.

Telling the police

Only you can decide whether or not to report the assault to the police. If you don't know what to do, we can talk to you about what it would mean and what your options are.

You can report the attack to the police straight away, later, or not at all if you choose. If you report an attack soon after it has happened, however, it may give the police an opportunity to get physical evidence against your attacker that might be gone if you report the crime later. A police officer will take basic details from you. If the assault happened recently, the police will arrange an examination by medical staff to collect evidence.

You may be near one of the growing number of sexual assault referral centres (SARC). These are local partnerships between the police, health services and voluntary organisations set up to focus on your immediate support needs. They are independent one-stop centres where victims of sexual assault can receive medical care and support while at the

same time having the opportunity to help any police investigation (if you choose to report the crime). The centres include facilities for forensic examination to collect physical evidence. If appropriate, the police will ask you if you'd like to be referred, or you can go directly to the SARC yourself if you don't want to report the incident.

The police will take further details from you only when you feel ready. The statement you make will be used as the main evidence if your attacker is caught and there is a court case. The police should arrange an interpreter for people who have difficulties with English.

You will be told the name of the officer dealing with your case. The police will let you know if someone is caught and charged and whether or not they are released on bail. You should tell the police if you are worried that the attacker will harass or intimidate you.

If the police charge someone with rape or indecent assault, they pass the evidence to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) who prepare the case for court. If you want, we can help you to deal with the police and the CPS.

The court process

You may have to wait a few months for a case to go to court. You'll be told of the court date by the Witness Care Unit (usually run jointly by the police and Crown Prosecution Service) and can also tell them of any dates that are a problem for you. If the person pleads 'guilty', you will not have to give evidence but you can still choose to go to court if you want to. The police or CPS should tell you what sentence has been given. If the person pleads 'not guilty' you may be asked to go to give evidence. If this happens, remember that you can take a friend for support, or we can arrange for one of our volunteers to go with you (see the information on the Witness Service below).

Going to court

If you have to go to court in connection with the attack, we have information on what to expect and how we can support you. Talk to one of our staff or volunteers, ask for our leaflet or see our website. There is also a range of measures to help protect you and your privacy through the court process – we can give you details and help make the necessary arrangements.

The Witness Service

We run the Witness Service in every criminal court in England and Wales. We can support you and anyone you bring to court with you. We can explain what to expect and can usually let you see a courtroom before the trial. In many courts we have private waiting areas.

Note: From April 1, 2015, this service will be provided by Citizens Advice.

Other legal action

It is possible to take out a private prosecution for rape or sexual assault or to go to the civil court to sue the alleged attacker for damages. If you think you might want to do this you should consult a solicitor. If you are worried about your safety you should tell the police and you may be able to get an injunction to help make sure that your attacker stays away from you.

When an offender is released

If your attacker is sentenced to one year or more in prison, the Probation Service must ask you if you want to be informed about plans for his or her release. You should tell the Probation Service if you have any concerns about this.

Compensation

As a victim of sexual violence, you may be able to get Criminal Injuries Compensation. Normally the crime must have been reported to the police for you to qualify, but we can give you more information about this.

Other useful addresses:

Survivors UK helpline

For men who have experienced sexual violence

0845 122 1201

www.survivorsuk.co.uk

National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)

0808 801 0331

www.napac.org.uk

To find a solicitor or advice agency contact

Civil Legal Advice

0345 345 4 345

www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice

We can also give you details of other local organisations that can help.

Contact your local Victim Support office:



Our Victim Supportline **08 08 16 89 111** gives information and support for anyone affected by crime.

You can contact us using Text Relay by adding 18001 before any of our phone numbers.

Published by Victim Support
President HRH The Princess Royal

Victim Support, Hallam House,
56–60 Hallam Street, London W1W 6JL
Telephone: 020 7268 0200
www.victimsupport.org.uk

Charity registration: 298028 Company no: 2158780
Registered in England. Limited by guarantee.
Registered office as above.