



sexual assault
HELP FOR SURVIVORS

A Comprehensive Guide From
St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital
Crime Victims Treatment Center



To The Survivor of a Sexual Assault:

In the following pages, you will find information about medical treatment in the Emergency Department, about possible future physical and emotional reactions, and about options for continuing medical care, counseling and criminal justice involvement.

This booklet has been prepared by the St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Crime Victim Treatment Center (CVTC). Our Program is staffed by certified social workers who are specialists in dealing with the emotional trauma of sexual assault. If the information you need isn't here, or if you just need someone to talk to who understands what you're going through, call us at (212) 523-4728. *All our services are confidential and free of charge.* We're here to help you – now or at any time in the weeks and months ahead. For more information about CVTC, look at our brochure in the pocket at the back of this booklet.

*Sexual assault can
happen to anyone.*

No matter what the circumstances, the important thing to remember is that you've just been through a serious trauma. Your decision to get medical care in our Emergency Department is the first step towards healing both physically and emotionally.

At St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, we want to give all survivors of sexual assault the most compassionate and comprehensive care possible. We know that a medical examination after a sexual assault can be an upsetting experience – so it's important to us that you understand all of your options for medical treatment.

Your care in our Emergency Department may include the following:

- Information and support provided by a sexual assault crisis volunteer advocate or member of the hospital staff regarding your rights and options concerning medical treatment, forensic evidence collection and reporting to the criminal justice system.
- A comprehensive medical examination performed by a qualified physician or sexual assault examiner
- Treatment of injuries
- Collection of forensic evidence in a state-approved Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit
- Photography of injuries for legal purposes if appropriate
- Evaluation of risk for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and emergency prophylactic (preventative) medication if appropriate
- Evaluation of risk for pregnancy and emergency prophylactic (preventative) medication if appropriate
- Referrals for follow-up care

Why should you have a specialized medical examination following a sexual assault?

It's important to get medical treatment as soon as possible after a sexual assault to make certain that all injuries are identified and treated and to provide any tests and medications necessary to prevent short and long-term complications. It is also very important to collect evidence of the sexual assault that can be used to prosecute the crime.

Our Emergency Department staff is trained to provide state-of-the-art medical treatment. Whenever possible, you will be seen by a Sexual Assault Forensic (SAFE) Examiner. SAFE Examiners are specialists in the treatment of sexual trauma and the collection and documentation of forensic evidence.

What are the steps of a sexual assault medical examination?

A sexual assault medical examination will include the steps listed below. You have the right to refuse any or all parts of the examination.

The steps to the exam are as follows:

1. The examiner asks questions regarding your general health. If you are female, you are asked about your menstrual history, use of birth control and most recent occurrence of consensual intercourse.
2. The examiner asks a more detailed question about the sexual assault. This information is used to guide the physical exam to make sure that any injured areas are evaluated. It's also important in making sure that any potential evidence is collected and documented in the medical record.

3. The examiner conducts a head-to-toe examination looking for areas of tenderness, swelling, bruises and cuts or scrapes. If any of these types of injuries are present, you may be asked for consent to photograph these injuries.
4. The examiner conducts a visual examination of the external genital area. If injuries are present, the examiner may use a colposcope (a microscope/ camera that can magnify and take pictures) to document the injuries. The photographs taken with the colposcope will be part of the forensic evidence.
5. The examiner collects forensic evidence as part of the examination. This includes samples taken from various parts of your body that will be put into the evidence collection kit. The examiner will also collect your underwear and any other clothing that might be used as evidence because of rips, stains or debris.
6. The examiner will conduct an internal bimanual examination.
7. Finally, the examiner will discuss your risk factors for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. If you are at risk, preventive medications and emergency contraception will be offered.

Most of the time, a rape crisis advocate will be called to help you. Advocates are volunteers from the community who have been specially trained by the Crime Victim Treatment Center. The advocate will explain what is going to happen, make sure your questions are answered, and provide support. If a rape crisis advocate isn't available, an emergency Department staff member will be available to help you. If you want, the advocate or a friend or family member can be with you during your examination.

*What is forensic evidence
and why should I have
evidence collected if I'm
not sure that I want to report
the crime to the police?*

Forensic evidence includes semen, blood, hair or debris found on your body or your clothes. The medical and forensic parts of the exam are done at the same time. Samples are collected and placed in a specially designed evidence collection kit. They can be used to help identify the assailant through DNA analysis. Forensic evidence also includes medical chart notes and photographs that document injuries. This evidence is very important in the prosecution of sexual assault cases.

Even if you're uncertain about reporting to the police, we hope that you decide to have forensic evidence collected as part of your examination. Often, people who are unsure about reporting a sexual assault decide to do so after they have time to recover. Collecting forensic evidence makes it much easier to pursue a prosecution should you choose to report in the future. The evidence collection kit

will be kept for one year. During that time, if you decide to report, the kit will be turned over to the police. At the end of one year, it will be thrown away.

Do I have to report a sexual assault to the police?

In New York State, sexual assault does not have to be reported to the police unless a gun or life-threatening knife injury is present or the victim is a minor who was assaulted by a parent or guardian. Except in those circumstances, it's up to you to decide whether you wish to report the crime to the police. We know that some people are reluctant to report sexual assault because they think that they will be blamed, because they are ashamed or because they are afraid that the assailant will hurt them again. Counselors at the Crime Victim Treatment Center can help you sort out what's best for you, and, if you do decide to report, to help you with the criminal justice process.

Am I at risk for getting a sexually transmitted disease (STD) from the assault?

The likelihood of getting an STD as a result of a sexual assault depends on a number of factors such as type of sexual contact, and whether the assailant was infected with an STD or HIV. You will be offered medication to reduce the risk of contracting certain STDs such as hepatitis B, gonorrhea, syphilis and chlamydia. It's important to return for follow-up examination to ensure that no infection is present. If you have received the Hepatitis B vaccine, you will need to have repeat vaccinations in one month and six months. If you develop symptoms such as burning, itching, unusual discharge, or sores on your genitals, anal area, or in your mouth, don't wait for your follow-up appointment. Call the number at the back of this booklet for follow-up care right away, or go to your usual health care provider or clinic.

Could I get AIDS?

AIDS is caused by HIV, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. Even if the person who assaulted you was infected with HIV, your risk of getting the virus from a single exposure is low. However, there are medications that can prevent HIV infection. These medications, called HIV Post Exposure Prophylaxis (HIV PEP), must be administered within 36 hours of a sexual assault and must be taken for four weeks in order to be effective. Your examiner will discuss your risk for contracting HIV and the advisability of taking preventive medications. If you decide to take the HIV PEP, you will take one dose of the medications in the Emergency Department and be given a four-day "starter pack" of daily dose medications. Be sure to take all of the medications as directed. You will also be given a follow-up appointment at the Center for Comprehensive Care, the hospital's HIV clinic, where you will be tested for HIV and the remainder of the one month's supply will be provided. If you choose not to go to the HIV clinic, you can obtain a low cost HIV test at your local Planned Parenthood office.

How can I prevent pregnancy?

If the possibility of pregnancy is a consideration, you will be offered emergency contraception. However, to be effective this medication must be taken within 72 hours of the assault.

How can I tell if I was drugged?

It's very difficult to predict the exact effects of "date rape" drugs such as Rohypnol and GHB. Reactions vary depending on factors such as the type and amount of the drug, and the weight, gender and metabolism of the victim. Following are signs that you may have been drugged:

- if you felt more intoxicated than usual from the amount of alcohol you drank or if you felt "woozy" and "out of it";
- if you remember taking a drink but can't remember what happened for a period of time afterward; or
- if you feel as though someone had sex with you but can't remember the details.

Tell the examiner that you have no memory of the event, or tell what you do remember. The examiner will help you decide whether to collect a urine specimen for analysis for "date rape" drugs. If you choose to report to the police, that specimen will be analyzed at the discretion of the District Attorney's office. This test is most effective if a specimen is collected within 72 hours of the assault.

What happens when I'm done with my examination?

When you are finished with your treatment in the Emergency Department, you will be given a paper noting the kinds of examinations and tests you received, and options for follow-up care. You will be referred to the appropriate St. Luke's or Roosevelt clinic. If you prefer, you can go to your own physician. Either way, it's important to have a follow-up exam within two weeks of your Emergency Department visit. At this appointment you should be reexamined to make certain any injuries are healing properly; you should also be evaluated for STDs.

If you've decided to take the HIV PEP medication, you will also be referred to the Center for Comprehensive Care (Samuels Clinic at Roosevelt Hospital or the Morningside Clinic at St. Luke's Hospital).

In addition, you will be referred to the *Crime Victims Treatment Center* (CVTC) which provides free counseling and advocacy with law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.

To obtain your test result, call (212) 523-3088. If you have any difficulty obtaining your test results or questions about getting follow-up medical care, call the Crime Victims Treatment Center at (212) 523-4728. CVTC specialists are always available to help you.

*What about the expenses
I've had because of the
assault? Is there any way
I can get help?*

In approximately four weeks, you will receive a bill from St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital for the examination and treatment received in the Emergency Department. If you have medical insurance, the bill should be sent to your provider first. If your insurance does not cover all the expenses or you do not have medical insurance and received a medical and forensic exam for the sexual assault, the NYS Crime Victims Board will help you.

The New York State Crime Victims Board (CVB) is a government agency established to help crime victims and reimburse incurred expenses and costs, which are a direct result of the crime. You may be able to receive money to cover any or all of the following: medical expenses not covered by insurance, counseling services, transportation expenses for court appearances, and lost wages if you lose time from work because of the assault. You are eligible to receive benefits if

you receive a sexual assault medical and forensic examination at a hospital or if you report the crime to the police.

However, the Crime Victims Board is the payer of last resort, which means that if you have medical insurance, you must use that insurance first to offset Emergency Department bills before CVB will pay. We at CVTC strongly believe that victims of violence should not have to pay for the costs for treatment and recovery from their sexual assault. It is for this reason that we recommend that a Crime Victims Compensation application be completed as soon as possible after you leave the hospital. For more information, call us at the Crime Victims Treatment Center. We are available to answer questions and help you expedite an application.

What are normal reactions to having been sexually assaulted?

What did I do wrong? Is it my fault? Unfortunately, most victims of sexual assault blame themselves in some way. You may blame yourself for not fighting back or looking too “sexy”. If you know your attacker, you may blame yourself for trusting him in the first place or for somehow giving the impression that you wanted to have sex despite saying no. Sexual assault is a crime about violence and aggression – not about sexual attraction. It is a violent crime that crosses all racial, ethnic, religious and economic classes. It happens to women and to men, to boys and to girls. It doesn’t matter what you wore or what you had to drink or where you were. It is the rapist who has committed the crime, not the victim.

I feel numb, is that normal? Yes it is normal. Keep in mind that there is no “correct” way to behave or to feel after a sexual assault. Each person is affected differently. In the hours after an assault, you

might react in any of the following ways: crying, shaking, laughing, or perhaps you are silent and calm in order to manage your anxiety. However you react, it’s the right way for you.

How will I feel later? After a few days or weeks, you might experience a loss of appetite, nightmares, uncontrolled crying jags, fits of anger, persistent anxiety, depression, and/or feelings of vulnerability. You may have difficulty concentrating or find yourself constantly reliving and rethinking the crime. If you have been sexually or physically victimized in the past, the assault may bring up memories and feelings connected with past experiences. These are normal responses to a traumatic event.

Can I be sexually assaulted in an intimate partner relationship?

Yes. If sexual violence is accompanied by a pattern of power and control by your partner, leading you to feel emotionally, verbally and physically abused, you are experiencing domestic or intimate partner violence in addition to the sexual assault. If your partner's violent behavior is becoming more frequent, your personal safety may be at risk and we urge you to get help.

Below are some safety planning tips which may help you if you are in a violent intimate partner relationship.

DURING AN ABUSIVE EPISODE:

1. Call for help-Dial 911 for the police anytime you feel threatened or afraid. Or call a friend or family member to come get you.

2. Get out if you can – leave the situation/residence if possible. Take the children with you.

IN YOUR HOUSE:

1. Change locks, reinforce doors and windows.
2. Arrange to have someone stay with you.
3. Consider changing your phone number.
4. Rent a P.O. Box away from home.
5. Obtain an Order of Protection.
6. Notify friends and family of your situation.

PLANNING AHEAD:

1. Develop a plan with your children.
2. Arrange to have a place to go.
3. Make copies of important papers and hide them.
4. Have important telephone numbers available.

A Final Word...

The sexual assault happened – but it doesn't have to stop you from living your life in the way that you want to. It may be weeks or months or even years before you put this experience behind you. The healing time varies with each individual. Be patient with yourself. And don't try to cope on your own. What most often helps is being able to talk about the crime. Any feelings you have (anger, guilt, fear, revenge, self-blame) are normal and understandable.

Supportive counseling can be very helpful because it provides a safe place to sort out your feelings with someone who understands what you're going through. We know that people who get counseling heal and recover from their trauma more quickly and are much less likely to have long-term problems. The Crime Victims Treatment Center has over twenty years of experience with helping survivors of sexual assault. Our services are free and confidential.

You may not want to talk just now. You may want to forget everything connected with the assault. That, too, is normal. But... please remember... *you didn't deserve to be sexually assaulted, you are not to blame, and we are here to help whenever you feel ready.*

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

ST. LUKE'S-ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL CENTER PHONE NUMBERS

St. Luke's-Roosevelt Crime Victim Treatment Center
(212) 523-4728

St. Luke's Hospital Emergency Department
(212) 523-3335

St. Luke's Hospital Obstetrics & Gynecology Clinic
(212) 523-4463

Roosevelt Hospital Emergency Department
(212) 523-6800

Roosevelt Hospital Obstetrics & Gynecology Clinic
(212) 523-6076

Pediatric Clinic
St. Luke's Hospital
(212) 523-3211

Test Results
(212) 523-3088

Center for Comprehensive Care, Samuels HIV Clinic
Roosevelt Hospital
(212) 523-6500

Center for Comprehensive Care, Morningside HIV Clinic
St. Luke's Hospital
(212) 523-3847

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE PHONE NUMBERS

New York Police Department Special Victims Report Line
(212) 267-RAPE

Manhattan Special Victims Detective Unit
(212) 694-3010

Manhattan District Attorney's Sex Crime
Special Victims Bureau – Adult
(212) 335-9373

Manhattan District Attorney's Sex Crime
Special Victims Bureau – Children
(212) 335-4300

Manhattan District Attorney's Victim Witness Aid Unit
(212) 335-9938

Safe Horizon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line
1-800-621-HOPE

New York City Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project Hotline
(212) 714-1141

New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault
(212) 523-4344

New York State Crime Victims Board Hotline
1-800-247-8035

New York State Crime Victims Board – New York City office
(718) 923-4325

The following information has been excerpted from “The Rights of Crime Victims in New York State” published by the NYS Crime Victims Board. For more information, call 1-800-247-8035 or contact their website at <http://www.cvb.state.ny.us>.

RIGHTS OF CRIME VICTIMS

Hospitals are required to offer sexual offense victims the opportunity to have a Rape Crisis Advocate or other trained sexual assault advocate present during the sexual offense examination. The sexual offense evidence will be collected and kept in a locked separate and secure area. The alleged sexual offense victim will be notified after one month (one year at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital) that the refrigerated evidence will be discarded according to the state and local health codes. The victims clothes will be returned upon their request.

If you are the victim of a sex offense, the law enforcement officer must inform you in writing, of the name, address and telephone number of the nearest rape crisis center. In addition, all police departments, district attorneys' and presentment agencies (agencies who prosecute juvenile delinquents or persons in need of supervision) must provide a private setting for interviewing rape/sexual assault victims. The only people present during the interview are: 1) persons directly and

immediately related to interviewing the victim, 2) the victim, 3) if the victim wants, a social worker, rape crisis counselor, psychologist or other professional providing emotional support and 4) if requested by the victim, their parent(s).

A victim of a crime can get, without charge, a copy of the police report of the crime.

The victim has the right to the prompt return of property held for evidence unless there is a compelling reason for holding it.

A rape or sexual assault victim cannot be asked or required to take a polygraph test or psychological stress evaluator examination.

Crime victims have the right to be protected from tampering, threats, physical injury, or other kinds of intimidation. The police, sheriff's department, or district attorney can offer advice regarding appropriate measures. If necessary the court can issue an Order of Protection. Additionally, intimidating a witness is a felony, apart from any charges the defendant may already face. If you are threatened or harassed by anyone about the case, contact the district attorney's office, police or sheriff's department immediately.

The victim can request that a defendant convicted of a felony sexual offense be ordered to undergo an HIV test.

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