

Victim Support

Rape and sexual assault

Information for men

Coping after rape or sexual assault

Being raped or sexually assaulted is a shocking experience and the effects can last a long time. Men can find this kind of attack difficult to deal with because this is widely, but wrongly, thought of as a crime that only affects women. 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 an 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

There is a myth that only strangers carry out sexual attacks. But many assaults are committed by someone the victim knows, including partners, and close friends.

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 help thousands of victims of rape and sexual violence every year. Our specially trained volunteers give information, practical help and emotional support.

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 volunteers can visit you at home (if you want us to, and if doing so will not put you at further risk) 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 Victim Support service, or to the national Victim Supportline on 0845 30 30 900 (calls charged at the local rate).

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.

Health issues

You may be worried about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or other injuries after an attack. If you are over 16,

hospitals and doctors must see you in complete confidence, and will not tell the police unless you ask them to. Even if you are under 16, most doctors will try to keep what has happened to you as confidential as possible. If you prefer not to use your own GP there are many clinics which offer free and confidential testing and advice.

Even if you have no symptoms, a check up for STIs is a safeguard. You can get help and advice from your GP or practice nurse. They can refer you to a genito-urinary medicine (GUM) 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.

For confidential advice about HIV, call the THT Direct helpline on 0845 12 21 200 (10am - 10pm Monday to Friday, 12pm - 6pm Saturday & Sunday), www.tht.org.uk or the free 24-hour Sexual Healthline on 0800 567123.

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 with 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 assist 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 do

not 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 wish, Victim Support can help you in your contact with the police and the CPS.

The court process

You may have to wait a few months for the case to go to court. The police will send you a letter telling you the date of the hearing. 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 or ask for a copy of our *Going to court* leaflet. There are also a range of measures to help protect you and your privacy through the court process - we can give you details.

The Witness Service

Victim Support runs the Witness Service in every criminal court in England and Wales. Trained volunteers can support you and anyone who you wish to bring with you at the court. They can give you information about what to expect. They can usually arrange for you to see a courtroom before the trial, and can make sure that you do not have to sit near the accused and their family and friends while you are waiting. But they are not allowed to discuss the evidence you are giving as a witness.

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 obtain 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)

0800 085 33 30

www.napac.org.uk

To find a solicitor or advice agency contact

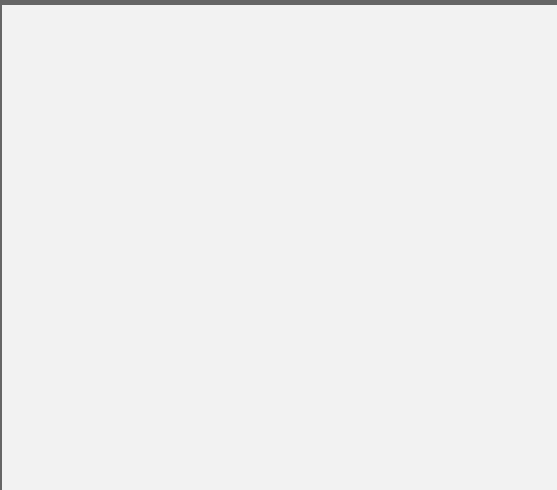
Community Legal Service Direct

0845 345 4 345

www.clsdirect.org.uk

Your local Victim Support may be able to give you details of other organisations in your area.

Contact your local Victim Support branch



Victim Supportline can also put you in touch with your local Victim Support branch.

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