

Chapter 19

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How to use this chapter

This chapter is about rape and other sexual violence. You may find some of the descriptions and stories upsetting or difficult to read. Please read with care and see the Resources section for more information and support. Also see Chapter 18, “Violence Against Women” (see page 312) for more about violence.

This chapter uses the word “victim” for someone who experienced sexual violence recently, and “survivor” for someone who has gone through some kind of recovery process after sexual violence. Ask anyone you are trying to help what words they use to describe what they experienced. When you use words that person prefers, it will help them be more comfortable speaking with you about what happened.

Rape and Sexual Violence



Sexual violence is when someone forces another person into any sexual activity. This force can be physical force, threats, or giving someone drugs or alcohol. There are many forms of sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking. Sexual violence can happen to anyone, but happens most often to women and girls.

Rape is when someone puts a body part or object inside another person's *vagina*, *anus*, or mouth without their *consent*. Consent means that people having any kind of sexual activity are doing so without being forced. A child or a teenager, someone under the effects of alcohol or drugs, or a sleeping or *unconscious* person cannot give their consent.

Rape and sexual violence are never the fault of the person who is attacked, even if that person does not fight back against their attacker. No matter what she decides to do, if it was not her choice, it was rape, and it is **never** her fault.

People who commit sexual violence often attack those with less power. The lower status of women and girls (see page 7) means they usually have less protection in the community and from authorities. Other marginalized groups—people with disabilities, refugees and migrants, ethnic minorities, gay, lesbian, and transgender people, and people without homes—also face more sexual violence. Young people, who have fewer rights and are smaller and weaker than adults, are also at higher risk.

► Sexual violence is **never** the fault of the person who is attacked.

► As with other kinds of violence, a rapist's goal is to gain power and control over their victims. For more information, see page 316.

Kinds of Sexual Violence

► *Knowing the attacker can make it harder for a victim of sexual violence to ask for help from family, friends, or the police. See page 334 for some ideas about getting help.*



sexual abuse



date rape

Sexual violence can take many different forms, including:

- rape and sexual assault
- sexual harassment
- sexual abuse of children
- stalking

Sexual violence can come from a variety of people, whether they are known or strangers. No matter who carries it out, sexual violence can cause many physical and mental health problems, both immediate and long-term.

RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Rape and sexual assault by someone the victim knows. A victim of rape and sexual assault often knows their attacker. They may be a family member, romantic partner, date, classmate, neighbor, or friend. Knowing and having trusted the person who assaulted you can make sexual violence even more difficult to talk about and recover from. Recovery can be harder when you continue to see your rapist in your family, school, workplace, or community.

Many victims are attacked by their boyfriends or other romantic or sexual partners. Many men believe that if they spend money on a woman, she must give sex in return. This makes some men think they have the right to have sex with their partners whenever they want, even if their partners do not want to.

When a person kisses someone it does not mean they want to do anything else. Having sex with someone does not give the right to have sex with the same person in the future. People can change their minds about consenting to sex at any time. Regardless of a relationship's history, forcing someone to have sex is rape.

Some cultures believe when a woman marries a man, she becomes his property. Sexual violence can happen in a marriage when a woman is made to feel it is her duty to have sex with her husband, whether she wants to or not. It is also sexual violence when women are forced to have sex they do not want in order to have a place to live, support their children, get money, or keep their jobs. These kinds of sexual violence are rarely discussed and even more rarely punished. But a person should always be able to refuse an unwanted sexual approach from anyone, no matter the reason.



Rape and sexual assault by a stranger. This is what many people think of when they hear the word “rape,” but it is much less common than assault by someone the victim knows. A woman may be attacked on the street, in a public place, or in her home.

Gang rape. Sometimes more than one person rapes the same victim. Gang rape may involve using alcohol or drugs on the victim. Gang rape is usually a planned rape. Less frequently, it may start as a consensual encounter between 2 people and then others join without the victim’s consent.

Prison rape. After someone is arrested, they may be sexually assaulted or raped by police, prison guards, or other inmates.

War rape. Soldiers or fighters use rape as a weapon to terrorize their enemies. Soldiers may gang rape women and girls in front of their families to show their power. Women may be held in camps and forced into prostitution or sexual slavery to survive, keep their children safe, or get food.



► *Survivors of war rape need more care for their physical and mental health. They may need surgery for severe injuries to their genitals. During a war, most victims have no access to family planning or abortion, which results in unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.*

During war, rape is used as a form of torture.

OTHER KINDS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual harassment usually happens at work or school when a peer, boss, or teacher forces unwanted sexual attention on someone. Victims may be threatened with losing their job, failing their class, or another punishment if they refuse or if anyone.

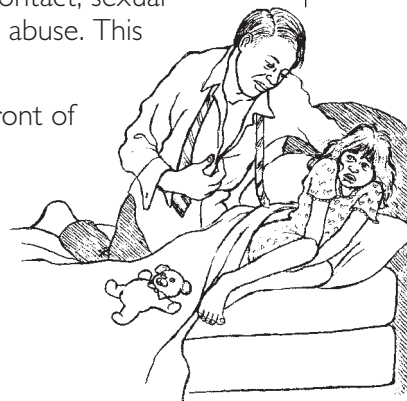
Sexual abuse of children. A child cannot consent to any sexual activity. Even if it does not include physical contact, sexual interaction with a child or teenager is sexual abuse. This includes when an adult:

- shows or touches their sexual parts in front of a child.
- has sexual conversations with a child.
- touches a child in a sexual way.
- makes, owns, or shares sexual videos or images of children.
- has any kind of sexual activity with a child.

Most of the time, the abuser is a person the child knows. When the abuser is a family member, this is called incest.



sexual harassment



Child sexual abuse can be rape or can happen even if there is no physical contact between an adult and child.

Stalking is when someone repeatedly contacts, harasses, or gives unwanted attention to a person in a way that makes them anxious, uncomfortable, or fear for their safety. Like other kinds of sexual violence, stalking is about power and control over another person. Stalkers ignore being told to stop. They may:



- watch or follow you from a distance.
- make repeated and unwanted physical, verbal, or eye contact with you.
- give you gifts that make you uncomfortable.
- threaten you, your family, or your friends.

Some stalkers use cell phones, computers, and other electronic devices (cyberstalking) to:

- send you repeated unwanted emails, texts, or social media.
- publish your personal information or threaten you online.
- install video cameras to monitor your personal life.
- track your location.
- track your online activity by checking your phone or computer, or installing software to do that.

Technology can make it harder to identify and stop the stalker. Social media gives stalkers easy access to personal information (location, relationships, and interests) that they can use to harass you. Learn how to protect yourself when using technology.

If someone is stalking you:

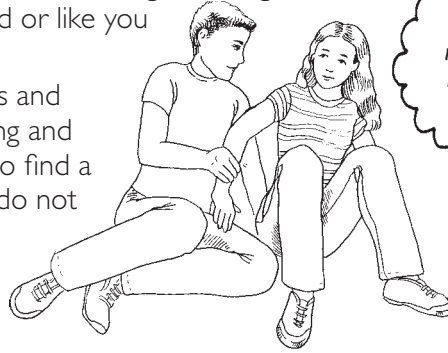
- Avoid the stalker as much as you can. This can be hard if the person is close to you or your family.
- If the stalker contacts you by phone, email, or social media, tell them clearly that you want the contact to stop. After that, stop responding to them and block them from contacting you.
- Tell others, like friends, family, or people you work with, about the situation.
- Keep proof of contact from the stalker, like text messages, letters, gifts, emails, and screenshots, that prove you are being stalked. You can also keep a record or journal of stalking activity, which may be useful if you report it to the police.

Victims may have trouble identifying stalking as sexual violence and getting support for it, but stalking should be taken seriously. Stalking can cause anxiety, stress, trouble sleeping or eating, or other mental health problems (see pages 419 and 420). Stalkers may become more violent over time. Rapists often stalk their victims before attacking them.

As individuals and as a community, people can take steps to protect themselves and each other against rape and sexual assault. But if someone is sexually attacked, that person should never be blamed for failing to prevent it.

WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Trust your feelings. If you feel like something is not right, it probably is not. If you feel afraid or like you want to leave a situation, go.
- Make sure all locks on windows and doors in your home are working and use them. If you return home to find a door or window forced open, do not go in alone.
- When away from home, stay in groups when you can. People are safer and stronger when they look out for each other.
- Walk confidently when you are alone. Try to stay in lighted areas. Be aware of your surroundings and the people around you rather than listening to headphones or looking at your phone. Keep your phone close in case you need to call for help.
- If you think you are being followed, try walking in another direction or going up to another person, house, or store.
- If you go out with someone, plan how to get home if you decide you need to leave. It is better not to go if you will not be able to get back without help.
- When someone makes you uncomfortable, tell them clearly and firmly to stop. Get away from that person as soon as you can.
- If you are attacked, physically defend yourself. Push your attacker away, yell at him, and do whatever you can to get out of the situation.
- If your attacker is someone you live with, make a safety plan to escape (see page 322).
- If your attacker has power over you (for example, your boss or teacher), let him know that you are not frightened and tell him to stop. Warn other women about him. If you must continue to deal with him, try not to be alone with him.
- Do not be silent. Tell someone you trust if you are experiencing sexual violence.



How to Prevent Sexual Violence

I don't want to look stupid by running away from him... It's probably nothing anyway.

Trust your feelings. It is better to explain a misunderstanding later than to be raped.



self defense

WAYS TO HELP SOMEONE IN DANGER

When stopping sexual violence from harming someone else, try not to put yourself at risk. These ideas can help you help someone in danger:

- Talk to the person away from their harasser. Ask what help or support they need. Offer to keep them company or walk them to a safe place.
- Create a distraction. Help them get out of the dangerous situation by starting a conversation and not leaving them alone. Suggest going somewhere else, bringing more people into your group, or continuing to talk to keep them company.
- Ask others for help. Ask the person's friend, a bartender, a security guard, or someone else to make sure the person is not in danger.
- After the threat has ended, a person may still feel scared or not know what to do. Listen to them, walk them to their destination, and try to help them get the support they need.

Every person should learn how to protect themselves from sexual violence, but we need to work together to create lasting change. For some ideas, see page 338.

WAYS TO PREVENT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- Teach children how to tell the difference between affectionate touching and sexual touching.
- Teach children no one should touch them in ways they do not want to be touched, just as they should not touch others in ways they do not want to be touched.
- Teach children the names of their body parts so they can communicate with you about their bodies.
- Believe a child who says they feel uncomfortable around an adult or older child, no matter who that person is.

► *Children who are abused or who witness others being abused are often asked to keep secrets. Build trust and make sure children know who they can speak with when something is wrong.*

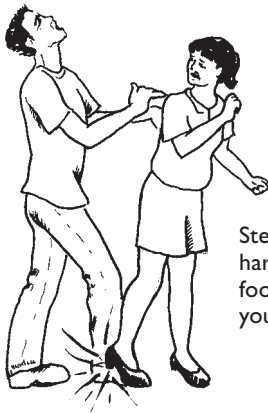


Below are some self-defense movements you can use to fight off an attacker. Hit as hard as you can, and do not be afraid to hurt an attacker. You can practice these movements with a friend. See page 146 to learn more about self-defense for people with disabilities.

Self-Defense for Women

If you are attacked from behind

Hit him hard in the stomach with your elbow.



Step down hard on his foot with your heel.

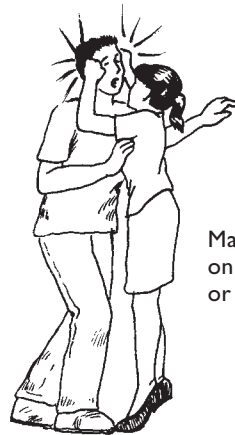
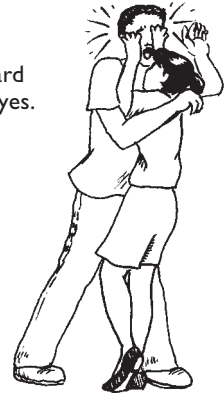
Reach back with your hand, grab his testicles (balls), and squeeze them hard.



With your heel, kick him hard in his lower leg or knee.

If you are attacked from the front

Dig your fingers hard into his eyes.



Make 2 fists and hit him on each side of his head, or on his ears.

Make your hands into fists and hit him as hard as you can on his nose.



Lift your knee, and push it as hard and fast as you can into his testicles (balls).

What to Do If You Have Been Raped or Sexually Assaulted

Each person's experience with rape or sexual assault is different. Not knowing what to do or how to feel after being assaulted is common. But it is important to take care of yourself:

- Do not blame yourself. What happened was not your fault.
- Go to a safe place like a friend's house or a public place with other people—somewhere away from your attacker, where you are not alone, and where you feel safe.
- Get support. Call someone you trust. You do not have to go through this alone.
- Get medical attention as soon as possible to treat any injuries and get medicines to prevent infections and pregnancy.
- Decide if you want to report the assault to the police. To help you decide, see below for information to consider.

If someone you know has been raped or sexually assaulted

*I believe you.
It's not your
fault. I will
help you.*



- Make sure they are physically safe.
- Tell them what happened was not their fault.
- Be supportive and listen without judgment. Believe what they tell you and validate their feelings.
- Respect their wishes for privacy and safety. Do not tell anyone unless they want you to.
- Go with them to see a health worker, get mental health care, see a lawyer, report the assault to the police, or anything else they want to do.
- Be patient. Respect their needs and give them time to heal. Keep supporting them throughout their healing process.
- Do not protect the attacker. This person is a danger to everyone in the community.
- Take care of yourself and get support if you need it.

Laws about sexual assault and rape vary. Before going to the police, it helps to know your rights as a victim, the local laws, and who to talk to for more information. If the assault was at school, learn about your school policies. Also consider:

- How have the police treated other people in the community who reported assaults?
- Will the police can keep your report private if you want them to?
- How will the attacker be punished if caught?

If you report a rape to the police, do it as soon as possible. Do not bathe, change clothes, or comb your hair before going to the police station. This can help prove you were assaulted. Ask a person you trust to go with you and a woman health worker to examine you.

If you are not ready or choose not to go to the police, you may want to file a report later. Get medical help, even if you have no injuries, and tell them you were raped. You should be examined and given medicines to prevent pregnancy and STIs. Ask them to write down their findings and give you a copy. Include the date and time of the assault, where it happened, if there were witnesses, and how the attacker looked, including details like height, scars, tattoos, and clothing. Keep your papers in a safe place, along with everything from the assault, like your clothes and anything the attacker wore or touched (put these in plastic bags)

► *If there is no health worker who can treat you, the information on pages 336 and 337 can help you prevent and treat some of the problems yourself.*



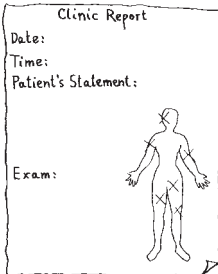
**emergency
contraception, 223
STIs, 261**

To the health worker

If you give care to someone who has been raped:

Treat them with kindness and understanding. Do not blame them. They may find it difficult for you to see or touch them, so explain everything you will do and wait until they are ready to be touched.

Treat their health problems. Give medicines to prevent STIs, HIV, and pregnancy. If the person is already pregnant, help them decide what they want to do.



Keep careful records of what you find.

If your clinic does not keep records, make one and keep it somewhere safe. Draw a picture of the front and back of their body and mark the places where they are injured. Explain what you have written and that it can be used as evidence if they go to the police.

Care for their mental health. Ask them if they have someone to talk to, and help them find mental health support if they want it.

Help them make their own decisions. If they want to go to the police, help them find legal services. Connect them with other community services for rape survivors.

Offer support for telling partners or family when they are ready. Help others learn about and find ways to support the person's recovery. Remember, family members may also need support themselves.

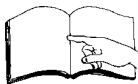


In some countries, women have worked with the police to have specially trained women police officers to help victims of rape and violence.



► *Always take someone with you to the police.*

Health Problems from Rape



STI medicines, 261
HIV testing, 288
preventing HIV after exposure, 518

IF YOU GO TO THE POLICE

In most places, rape is a crime. But after reporting it, getting justice is not certain and may take years. Proving that someone raped you can be very difficult and sometimes even dangerous. Always have someone you trust go with you to the police and the courts.

The police will ask you what happened. If you know the rapist, tell them who it is. If you do not, you will describe what he looks like. The police may ask you to go with them to find the rapist. You may also be asked to get a medical exam from a doctor who works with the police. This is not an exam to help you get well, but to help prove that you were raped.

If police arrest the rapist, you will have to identify him, either in front of the police or in front of a judge in court. If there is a trial, try to find a lawyer who has worked with rape cases before. The lawyer will tell you what to expect and help you prepare for the trial.

Going to court for a rape is never easy. You will have to remember and describe what happened over and over again. Not everyone will be supportive and understanding. Some may try to blame you or say you are lying.

PREGNANCY

Pregnancy can be prevented if you act quickly and use emergency contraception **within 5 days after the rape** (see page 223). Emergency contraception works best when used as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT *In some countries, abortion is safe and legal if someone has been raped. Ask a health worker or women's organization about what is possible in your country.*

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

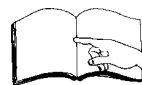
STIs are passed more easily during rape because the vagina, anus, or mouth is often torn. Since you cannot know if your attacker was infected, make sure you get treatment to prevent STIs. Take medicines for gonorrhea, chlamydia, and trichomonas and watch for signs of other STIs. You may need vaccinations against Hepatitis B, HPV, and tetanus if you have not had them. Check with the health worker.

Getting an HIV test and taking HIV medicines for 28 days can prevent HIV infection after a rape. Medicines must be started within 3 days (72 hours) of the assault.

TEARS AND CUTS

Rape can injure the *genitals*, anus, mouth, or throat by causing tears and cuts. These can be swollen and painful, but will heal in time. If there is a lot of bleeding, see a health worker trained to stitch tears. For small cuts and tears:

- Soak your genitals 3 times a day in warm water you have boiled and cooled. Putting chamomile in the water helps soothe and heal tears. You can also put gel from an aloe plant on the tears.
- Pour water over your genitals while passing urine so it will burn less. Drinking more liquid also helps—it makes urine weaker.
- Watch for signs of infection: heat, yellow liquid (*pus*) from the torn area, a bad smell, and pain that gets worse.
- A *bladder* or *kidney* infection is common after rape.



wounds and sores, 306
bladder and kidney infections, 366

SEX AFTER RAPE

When you are ready, you can have sex again after rape. It is best to wait until any injuries have healed and your genitals no longer hurt. It might also take time for you to feel physically and emotionally ready. For many people, sex brings back memories of the rape. Talk to your partner about how you feel and what you need to feel safe. Use condoms when you have sex for 3 months after the rape to reduce the risk of passing STIs.

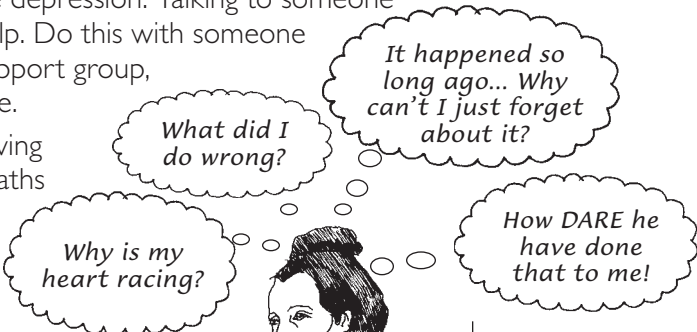
I don't feel ready yet.



MENTAL HEALTH AFTER RAPE

Rape can affect mental health in many ways.

- If you have lasting feelings of sadness, no energy, or not feeling like yourself, you may have depression. Talking to someone about your feelings can help. Do this with someone you trust, a therapist, a support group, or another survivor of rape.
- If you have flashbacks (reliving the rape), taking deep breaths and doing something that makes you feel safe can help.
- For anxiety and panic attacks, lie down and breathe deeply and slowly. Doing that every day for 10 minutes can lessen anxiety.



Everyone has their own way to heal. Whatever you do, be patient and kind with yourself.



► A self-defense class may help you to feel stronger and to express your anger.

Working for Change

Women who have been raped can have long-lasting problems. But sexual violence affects everyone in a community. Almost all women and girls, whether they have been assaulted or not, learn not to trust men. They learn not to attract men's attention, not to walk alone, and not to talk to men they do not know.

To create a world without sexual violence, we must work for:

- communities with open and flexible gender roles, none of which include violence as a way to control others.
- laws, justice systems, and individual actions that protect people against violence.
- media that do not portray women as objects or as people who enjoy violence against them.
- an equal chance for everyone to participate in the community.
- more people being able to talk honestly with their partners about what they each expect from a sexual relationship.

Until we achieve these goals, we need to help victims and survivors of sexual violence. We can:

- educate elected leaders, clergy, teachers, and others about sexual violence, and ask them to participate in ending it.
- train health workers how to treat people who have been raped and how to care for both their physical and mental health needs with kindness and respect.
- encourage health workers to find out what is required to punish a rapist and to help victims fill out legal forms.
- teach women and girls how to defend themselves.
- teach young people about sex and sexuality and how to express their wishes clearly and respect the wishes of others.
- learn about laws in your country that protect people who have been raped and educate others about those laws.

In a small town in El Salvador, the police refused to stop a known rapist because he was the son of a wealthy man. So the women of the town began painting the word "rapist" outside his house. This raised awareness about the rapist in town and the whole community, including his family, forced him to leave.



How a community in South Africa organized against rape

Early one Saturday morning, a 59-year-old woman was raped and stabbed by a man who had raped other women in the past. The victim survived and identified the rapist to the police. He was arrested and the woman was taken to the hospital. But the police released the rapist the same afternoon. He walked free.

We women of the township were very angry. The police had protected a man who hurt women and made us afraid to walk alone on the street. So the women's organization of our township decided to organize a protest.

Most of us work as domestic servants for rich white women who live in a nearby city. All of us stayed away from our jobs, demanding that the police charge this man with rape and assault, before we would go back to work.

We also asked the women we worked for to come speak with us. We wanted to talk to them about our problems. We know that all women, black and white, fear rape. We felt the white women might understand and be sympathetic to us. We also wanted the women whose husbands worked for the police to explain our problems to them and how bad it was for them to release a violent rapist back into the township.

But the white women were not sympathetic—they just got angry. We think they were upset because they had to do their own housework. When the Employers' Federation came to see about the protest, we told our men, "Please do not speak for us. This is a women's problem. Men are not being raped." The Employers' Federation would not meet with us, but after a week, a group of white women came to talk to us. We called off the protest, even though the rapist was only charged with assault, not rape. But people in the township were so angry that the rapist could no longer stand to live there.

The police arrested several of us who had organized the protest. They did not believe that women had organized the protest. They think men are behind everything that women do. But we women had become very strong.

We raised our voices to make people start to talk openly about the problem of rape. Most people don't talk about rape—they feel ashamed. Often the family of the raped girl or woman does not want to talk about it and does not want others to either.

But here it is different. We started organizing in the community for education, child care, pensions, and so on. We started talking about all the problems and things that we need to change. So we talk about rape and any sexual assault. People now see sexual assault as another kind of oppression. All the people in the township think the same about this; we are united in the struggle.

Anyone who was raped is trusted. If a woman says she was raped, we support her, no matter who she is. Even if she has a drinking problem, a rape is still a crime. In fact, it is worse because she was in a weak position. We do not blame a woman for a rape. We do not say that the rape was the woman's fault. So women can talk about sexual violence openly and they will get support.

