

What can I do if I have experienced sexual assault? (continued)

- Consider contacting your nearest sexual assault service or telephone a sexual assault crisis line to discuss what happened and get information about relevant options, through the health, police and legal systems.
- Obtain medical assistance. You may have injuries resulting from the sexual assault. It is also important to consider issues such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Doctors can offer testing, treatment and assistance with emergency contraception.
- Decide whether you wish to report the assault to the police. If it is a recent rape or sexual assault and you are considering reporting, it is best for forensic evidence if medical samples are taken within 72 hours. Although this is difficult to do after a sexual assault, the evidence is most effectively collected if the person goes straight to hospital without bathing and does not wash or throw out anything that could be potentially used as evidence.
- Consider counselling with a supportive and experienced counsellor. This should allow you a safe, private place to talk with someone who believes you and who will listen. Sometimes people try a few counsellors before they find someone with whom they feel comfortable.
- Express your feelings in a journal, through artwork or any other way that feels safe.

- Try to avoid unwanted sexual relationships or sexual behaviour with which you feel uncomfortable, as this may cause you to feel retraumatised.
- Use a telephone counselling or support service if you need someone to talk to, especially at times of crisis.

Statewide Sexual Assault Counselling 1800 010 120

You are not alone. People do survive sexual assault.

The Centre Against Sexual Violence offers free confidential information, support and/or counselling for women aged 12 years and over who have experienced child, past or recent sexual assault. Family, friends and others supporting a survivor can also access services at the Centre Against Sexual Violence.

CASV welcomes all individuals who identify as being from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender.

Other contacts in your area:

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Funded by Queensland Health

1 Scott, D., Walker, L., & Gilmore, K. (1990). Breaking the Silence: A Guide to Supporting Adult Victim/Survivors of Sexual Assault. CASA House: Melbourne.

Information for Survivors of Adult Sexual Assault



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Sexual assault is a crime.

Sexual assault is any sexual behaviour that is unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited. You have the right to say "NO" at any point and have your wishes respected.

Sexual assault can happen to anyone.

It is an act of violence, it is not about love or affection. It violates a person's sense of safety and control.

Perpetrators of sexual assault use power, force and manipulation to attempt to control another person's body, senses and emotions.

The perpetrator is usually male and most often someone known and trusted by the victim. This may include a partner, parent, sibling, grandparent, friend, work colleague or neighbour. Women and children are more often the victims of sexual assault.

Sexual violence remains an under-reported crime in our community.¹

The impact of sexual assault is unique for each person.

However, there are many common feelings and effects that people may experience either immediately or some time after sexual assault. Some of these can include:

- **Shock**
- **Confusion**
- **Constant alertness**
- **Fear**
- **Shame**
- **Self-Blame**
- **Anger**
- **Not wanting to be touched**
- **Depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Sleeping difficulties**
- **Aloneness**
- **Lack of trust**
- **Flashbacks** – intrusive memories of the assault/s
- **Dissociation** – feeling out of touch with yourself and your body

If you have experienced sexual assault:

- Remember that everyone is different and your feelings are normal, considering what you have been through.
- Sexual assault is a traumatic experience, and you may find it has affected many aspects of your life.
- It is important for you to take the time and space you need to deal with what has happened.
- Try not to blame yourself. The perpetrator is the only one responsible for the assault. No one ever deserves to be raped, no matter what the circumstance.
- Sexual assault is a crime and you have options through the health, police and legal systems.

Sexual Assault is never the victim's fault.

What can I do if I have experienced sexual assault?

- Ensure your current physical safety.
- If possible, find someone who you know and trust to support you through this difficult time. Your support people need to let you be in control of all decisions relating to the sexual assault. Being sexually assaulted can cause people to feel powerless and it is essential that you are able to make the decisions that are right for you at this time.