

Sexual Assault

Be aware and stay safe

Sexual assault is defined as anything that forces a person to join in unwanted sexual contact or attention. One of the best ways to protect yourself against sexual assault is to be aware of your surroundings.

Protect Yourself

Sexual assaults most often begin at bars, nightclubs or parties where it is easy for predators to use alcohol and drugs to weaken a potential victim's awareness. Follow these safety tips to avoid getting into an unwanted situation:

- Drink alcohol in moderation (or not at all) so you can stay alert to what is going on around you.
- Only accept drinks from trusted friends.
- Do not drink from punch bowls or other large, open containers.
- If your drink smells or tastes funny, do not consume any more of it.
- Do not leave your drink unattended. If you must abandon it, get a new one when you return.
- Make advance plans with friends to check on each other throughout the night.
- Do not leave with anyone you just met; stay safe by getting the person's phone number instead.

Sexual assaults do not just happen at parties or clubs. They can happen at any time and in any situation, which is why the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers these additional general safety tips:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- When going on a date with someone you do not know well, meet in a public place.
- Walk with confidence; you will appear stronger.
- Be assertive – do not let anyone violate your space.
- Lock all doors and windows when you are at home and know who is on the other side of the door before inviting the person inside.
- Have your keys ready before you reach your car or home.
- Park in well-lit areas and drive on well-traveled streets.
- Never hitchhike or pick up a hitchhiker.
- Trust your instincts if you feel uncomfortable.

After an Assault

- Get away from your attacker as soon as possible and get to a

safe place. Then, call 911 or the police.

- Call a friend or family member who you trust or the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE.
- Do not wash up, comb your hair, clean any part of your body or change clothes.
- Get to a hospital immediately. You need to be examined, treated for injuries and tested for pregnancy or any possible sexually transmitted diseases. The doctor will also need to collect evidence from the attack.
- File a police report. It is important your attacker is caught so that this does not happen to someone else.



Did you know...?

Rape is the most unreported crime in the United States. It is estimated that about half of all rapes never get reported because the attackers are usually familiar to the victim. While victims may feel embarrassed, scared or guilty at first, it is imperative they realize that rape is not their fault. Attackers often become repeat offenders if they are not caught.