



Frequently Asked Questions About Sexual Assault



DRCC
DURHAM RAPE
CRISIS CENTRE

Questions About Going To The Hospital

I don't want anyone to know this happened, why should I go to the hospital?

- You are safe at the hospital, it is totally confidential and no one will know you are there unless you want them to know.
- It's very important to take care of yourself as soon as possible following a sexual assault. Such an event can cause someone to experience shock or emotional/physical distancing from oneself that may lead to one not even realizing that they have been injured.
- It's important to have any injuries cared for so that healing can occur quickly.
- You may be at risk of getting pregnant or getting a sexually transmitted infection or disease.
- Hospital staff can offer you some information and emotional support, including resources to counselling services in your community. Research demonstrates that individuals who start counselling treatment early after a trauma are less likely to develop long-term emotional difficulties.
- Evidence such as bodily fluids, skin cells, hair particles, or drugs in one's urine are very time-sensitive to collect. These would easily be lost as time goes by after an assault. Such evidence can be a very important part of a court case if you chooses to report to the police in the following months.

Which hospital should I go to?

- If you are a victim of sexual assault/violence, you can contact the Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Care Centre (DVSACC) at 905-576-8711 x 33286.
- DVSACC is located at Lakeridge Health Oshawa at 1 Hospital Court, Oshawa, Ontario.
- Not all hospitals have a Sexual Assault Care Centre. These centres are equipped with specially trained staff and evidence kits that are designed for sexual assaults. It is very important that you go to a Sexual Assault Care Centre.
- The following hospitals in the surrounding areas have Sexual Assault Care Centres: Scarborough Grace Hospital (Scarborough), Women's College Hospital (Toronto) York Central Hospital (Richmond Hill).

Where do I go once I get to the hospital?

Go to the emergency triage desk and tell the triage nurse that you have been sexually assaulted and want to have an examination done at the Sexual Assault Care Centre.

Questions About Going To The Hospital

What will happen in the examination?

A specially trained nurse will guide you each step of the way. They won't do anything without your permission and will keep your records confidential.

The nurse will ask you what happened and will document the events that took place.

You will be given the option to have an internal exam done and have the results documented.

The nurse will collect the following evidence:

- Swabs that may contain semen, saliva, and/or blood
- Fingernail scraping (looking for skin cells of the perpetrator)
- Pubic hair combing (looking for pubic hair belonging to the perpetrator)
- Pictures and/or documentation of any tearing or bruising
- Clothing collection (looking for hair or fibre materials belonging to the perpetrator)
- Urine sample (if the victim has been drugged, they are looking at alcohol/blood levels)

How long will the evidence be kept?

- If you decide to give an evidence kit, you will have the choice to keep the evidence at the hospital (DVSACC) for 3-6 months. Your evidence will be kept on file and frozen during this period and will be discarded at 6 months without notification. You are welcome to call DVSACC before the six months and request to keep your evidence longer, allowing you time to decide if you would like to report to the police, in which case such evidence could be used in court proceedings to demonstrate that the perpetrator had contact with you.
- If you are unsure if you want to proceed after the six months, you can ask that your file be transferred to the police for safe keeping indefinitely.

What do I bring with me to the hospital?

- Your health card
- The clothing you were wearing at the time of the assault in a paper bag, if possible
- If you are wearing the clothing you were assaulted in, bring an extra change of clothes
- A book or magazine, as you may be waiting for some time
- If you feel comfortable, bring a supportive friend or request accompaniment from your local sexual assault centre

Questions About Going To The Hospital

What if I might have been drugged?

Bring a urine sample with you or a sample of your beverage to be tested for the suspected drug. The drug will be out of your system with your first morning's urination following consumption.

What medications might I be given?

- Preventative medication for HIV
- Emergency contraception (commonly known as “the morning after pill”) to prevent unwanted pregnancy
- Preventative medication for sexually transmitted infections
- Guidance to get follow-up bloodwork for HIV testing

How long will it take?

Often times the nurse and doctor are on call and may need to come in from another location. Depending on how busy the hospital is, you may have to wait for a number of hours before your examination. Please don't let this discourage you! You may want to bring a book, a friend, or an activity to help distract you and pass the time.

Can I bring someone with me or request accompaniment?

Absolutely! Going to the hospital is a very difficult and courageous step to take following a sexual assault. We highly recommend that you take a supportive friend or request accompaniment from a trained volunteer or counsellor from your local sexual assault centre.

What To Expect On a Crisis Line Call

Who can call the DRCC 24/7 Crisis and Support Line?

Anyone that has experienced any form of sexual/sexualized violence can access our crisis line. Sexual/sexualized violence includes, but is not limited to: sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, incest, childhood sexual assault/abuse, sexual exploitation, and human/sex trafficking. Anyone that is a support person for a survivor of sexual/sexualized violence can also call our crisis line. Lastly, our crisis line can be used to get information about the DRCC and our services.

Is the call confidential?

The crisis line is completely confidential. However, we have a duty to report any child abuse and/or neglect, assault of a person under 16 years of age, threat of harm to yourself or others, or if information is subpoenaed by the Courts.

What will happen when I call?

When you call, you will reach an answering service that will connect you with a crisis line responder. The crisis line responder can offer emotional support, referrals, and resources to assist and support you.

What if I don't know what to say when I call?

That is perfectly okay! Sometimes it can be difficult to find the words to speak, and your crisis line responder is there to support and work with you if you do not know initially what to say. You can say 'I don't know what to say' or 'I'm at a loss for words/can't find the words' or 'This is difficult for me/scary for me', and we'll go from there. Remember to take deep breaths.

How much information do I have to give the person that I am talking to?

There is not a minimum of information that you have to give. You are free to share whatever information you feel comfortable with sharing.

Is the crisis line a safe place?

Yes! The crisis line is a safe place, free from judgement and discrimination.

What To Expect On a Crisis Line Call

How long can I talk to someone on the crisis line during a call?

There is no limit to the amount of time it takes to speak with a crisis line responder. However, we try to keep calls to about an hour or so. If more support is needed, crisis line responders are able to stay on the line for longer to assist you.

How frequently can I call the crisis line?

There is no limit in how often you can call our crisis line. If you feel that you need ongoing support, you can ask your crisis line responder for resources such as counselling services, which may be able to best support you on an ongoing basis.

What kind of training do crisis line responders have to answer my call?

Crisis line responders must attend our intensive 6-week crisis line training course, which covers learning about sexual/sexualized violence, how to support survivors of sexual violence, grounding and stabilization techniques, as well as learning about other community agencies and resources.

What will happen if I feel and/or disclose that I am suicidal when I call?

The crisis line responder will do a risk assessment, provide you with emotional support, and help you to create a safety plan. If the crisis line responder assesses that you are still at risk of suicide, they have an obligation to call 9-1-1 to ensure your safety. The crisis line responder will stay on the line with you until the appropriate services arrive.

What if I have a complaint about the service I received on the crisis line?

If you have a complaint, please contact Durham Rape Crisis Centre's Community and Crisis Services Manager, Emma, at emma@drcc.ca.



Questions About Reporting

Can I still report if I took a shower?

Yes, you can still report the assault. It's important to remember that washing up or taking a shower can destroy potential evidence.

What should I do if I think a child has been assaulted?

If you know a child has been abused or assaulted, or if you suspect that a child is currently in danger, you have a legal obligation to report by informing the appropriate authorities.

Can I request a female officer?

You have the right to request the gender of the officer that attends your initial complaint and the right to request a SARO (Sexual Assault Response Officer) who is more knowledgeable about sexual assault. However, you are NOT guaranteed affiliation with one of these officers as this option is subject to their availability.

Has it been too long to press charges?

You may feel that you have no legal options available to you due the length of time that may have passed. However this is not the case. There is no statute of limitations on sexual assault. There is no required time limit for reporting, although sooner is better than later when considering the collection of evidence.

**Do you have another question
not listed here?**

**Send us an email at info@drcc.ca
with your questions!**