

What to do if You Have Been Sexually Assaulted



Okay, you've just been sexually assaulted. It doesn't matter where you were or what you were doing. It doesn't matter what you were wearing or saying. It doesn't even matter whether you were drinking or using drugs. You did not deserve to be assaulted or abused. Nobody does. **This is not your fault.**

You may be feeling physical pain from external or internal injuries; your emotions may be in turmoil or you may feel numb and be in shock. Sexual assault is traumatic and each person's response to it is different.

You don't have to cope with this alone, support is available. The following information can help you figure out what to do next.

GET TO A SAFE PLACE

Go somewhere you feel secure and protected. Phone the police if you are in danger or at risk.

CONSIDER ACCESSING MEDICAL CARE

Your emotional and physical health is very important. If you have just experienced a sexual assault, you may have internal or external injuries that require medical attention. There may also be some risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted blood-borne infections. Connect with your nearest sexual assault service or Alberta's ONE LiNE for Sexual Violence for information about where to go in your community. If you don't have a sexual assault service in your area, go to a hospital emergency unit, your doctor's office, or a walk-in clinic as soon as possible.

As someone who has experienced a sexual assault, you should be treated with dignity and respect at all times. Receiving medical treatment can help you to feel better physically and can also reduce some of the anxiety or stress you may be feeling.

REPORTING TO POLICE IS AN OPTION

Following a sexual assault, it's natural to feel shocked, confused, and unable to make decisions. There are many reasons why someone may choose to report to the police and there are many reasons why someone may choose not to report to the police.

There is no right or wrong answer when deciding whether to report to the police or not. It is important to make a decision that feels right for you. You might not feel like reporting is right for you now, but you may want to report later on. It is never too late to report to the police.

If you think you would like to report the incident to the police, you can call them directly.

Many sexual assault services in Alberta have a police and court support program that can provide information about reporting to police and the criminal legal system process to help you make an informed decision.

CONSIDER REACHING OUT FOR HELP

Connect with a Sexual Assault Service Near You

Talking with someone experienced in supporting people who have been sexually assaulted may be helpful. If and when you are ready, you can connect with your nearest sexual assault service by visiting the Get Help page on our website at www.aasas.ca. You can also call or text Alberta's ONE LINE for Sexual Violence for support and referral to specialized services near you at 1-866-403-8000.

Talk to Someone you Trust

If possible, reach out to a friend, family member, or support person you trust and ask them if they can be with you. The hours immediately after a sexual assault can be very confusing, and making decisions can be difficult. You may feel a need to be nurtured and comforted, and you don't have to cope with your experience alone.