



## Assault Prevention

Sexual assault is a crime of violence, not sexual passion. It is meant to degrade, humiliate and control. The attacker can be a stranger or someone known and trusted. It can happen to anyone, at any time, at any place. The trauma of being assaulted is a shock from which many victims never fully recover.

No matter which form it takes, sexual assault is as much a problem today as it has been throughout history. While those most at risk are people between the ages of 10 and 29, it can happen to anyone at any age.

There is no portrait of a “typical” rapist. These men, like their victims, are all ages and come from all racial and social backgrounds. They can be college students, married men, doctors, teachers, or unemployed transients. Most are not crazy or deranged men looking for sex. In fact the majority of offenders are highly intelligent, married men with families and have ready access to consensual sex; but they rape to control, dominate and humiliate the victim.

The information below provides suggestions on how to avoid dangerous situations, ways to resist if threatened or attacked, and how to cope after an attack. The information is by no means complete. There are numerous community organizations that provide prevention programs and post incident counseling to citizens and victims.

### Table of Contents

Myths and Facts about Sexual Assault  
Statistics  
Profiles of Rapists  
How to Reduce Your Risk of Becoming a Victim  
If You Are Attacked  
Surviving an Attack

### Myths and Facts About Sexual Assault

**MYTH:** Sexual assault is a crime of passion and lust.

Sexual assault is a crime of violence. Assaultants seek to dominate, humiliate and punish their victims.

**MYTH:** You cannot be assaulted against your will.

Assailants overpower their victim with the threat of violence or with actual violence. In cases of acquaintance rape or incest, an assailant often uses the victim's trust in assailant to isolate the victim.

**MYTH:** A person who has really been assaulted will be hysterical.

Survivors exhibit a spectrum of emotional responses to the assault: calm, hysteria, laughter, guilt, anger, apathy, shock. Each survivor copes with the trauma of the assault in a different way.

**MYTH:** Sexual assault is an impulsive act.

Seventy-five percent of all assaults are planned in advance. When three or more assailants are involved, 90% are planned. If two assailants are involved, 83%. With one assailant, 58% are planned.

**MYTH:** Assailants are usually crazed psychopaths who do not know their victims.

As many as 80% of all assaults involve either a known acquaintance, or someone the victim has had contact with, but does not know personally.

**MYTH:** Gang rape is rare

In 43% of all reported cases, more than one assailant was involved.

**MYTH:** Many women claim they have been sexually assaulted because they want revenge upon the man they accuse.

Only 4-6% of sexual assault cases are based on false accusations. This percentage of unsubstantiated cases is the same as with many other reported crimes.

**MYTH:** Persons who dress or act in a sexy way are asking to be sexually assaulted.

Many convicted sexual assault assailants are unable to remember what their victims looked like or were wearing.

**MYTH:** All women secretly want to be raped.

While women and men may fantasize about being overpowered during sexual relations it is usually with a person of their choosing, who they trust. They are in control of the fantasy. No one wants the physical and emotional pain caused by a sexual assault.

**MYTH:** Only young, pretty women are assaulted.

There is no such thing as a "typical victim." Both men and women are assaulted by both male and female assailants. Victims have ranged in age from newborns to 100 years old.

**MYTH:** It is impossible to sexually assault a man.

Men fall victim for the same reasons as women: they are overwhelmed by threats or acts of physical and emotional violence. Also, most sexual assaults that involve a male victim are gang assaults, by other males.

**MYTH:** If you do not struggle or use physical force to resist you have not been sexually assaulted.

If you are forced to have sex without your consent, you have been assaulted whether or not a struggle was involved.

## **Statistics**

Sexual assault continues to represent the most rapidly growing violent crime in America.

Over 700,000 women are sexually assaulted each year.

It is estimated that fewer than 50% of rapes are reported.

Approximately 20% of sexual assaults against women are perpetrated by assailants unknown to the victim. The remainder are committed by friends, acquaintances, intimates, and family members. Acquaintance rape is particularly common among adolescent victims.

Male victims represent five percent of reported sexual assaults.

Among female rape victims 61% are under 18.

At least 20% of adult women, 15% of college women and 12% of adolescent women have experienced some form of sexual abuse or assault during their lifetimes.

Over 50% of the attacks occur in the home, and most of these are planned.

In 85% of the cases, some type of direct force is used, whether it is choking, beating or plain physical force. A weapon is used one-third of the time.

Rapists rarely attack once. They have one of the highest repeat rates of all criminals. More than 70% of those arrested for the crime are re-arrested within seven years.

### **Profiles of Rapists**

The FBI has established four personality characteristics profiles for rapists. While most rapists will fit into one of the profiles, due to the fact that there are a variety of personalities, there is no one correct characteristic for a profile. Suspects may exhibit characteristics from one or more of the profiles.

## **Power Reassurance Rapist - 81%**

### **Motivation:**

To resolve self-doubts by reassuring himself of his masculinity with no real intent to further harm his victim.

### **Style:**

Surprise Approach with force.

Strikes between midnight and 5 am, usually at the victim's residence.

Selects victims through voyeurism.

Attacks victims who are alone or with small children.

Negotiates with the victim.

Does whatever the victim allows him to do.

Attacks in his own residence or work area.

Commits single assault.

May keep a diary.

**Social Interaction:**

Few friends  
Self-concept as a loser  
Menial job with little public contact

### **Power Assertive Rapist - 12%**

#### **Motivation:**

To resolve self-doubts by reassuring himself of his masculinity with no real intent to further harm his victim.

#### **Style:**

Exploits opportunity after one or two dates  
Slaps, hits, curses, tears rather than removes clothes  
Waits 20-25 days between assaults  
Performs multiple assaults  
disrobes victim  
Doesn't use mask or disguise  
Social Interaction:

Flashy car  
frequents singles bars  
"Hard hat" act  
"Macho" type

### **Anger Retaliatory Rapist - 5%**

#### **Motivation:**

To punish or degrade women by getting even; uses sex as a weapon for real or perceived injustices placed on him by women.

#### **Style:**

Acts spontaneously  
Commits assaults in his own area  
Social Interaction:

Loner  
Minimal contact with others  
Works at "Action jobs"

### **Anger Excitation Rapist - 2%**

#### **Motivation:**

Infliction of pain or erotic aggression

#### **Style:**

Uses premeditated con-style approach  
Immobilizes victim  
Assaults away from his area

Uses weapon and/or tools of choice  
Usually records his assaults  
Learns quickly by experience  
Does not experience remorse  
Social Interaction:

Family man  
“Good marriage”  
Compulsive  
Middle class

## **How to Reduce Your Risk of Becoming a Sexual Assault Victim**

While statistics say that most sexual assaults are premeditated, in some instances it is a “crime of opportunity,” such as a date rape. The victim and suspect, for whatever reason, are at the same place at the same time. Whether the assault is one of opportunity or premeditation, there are simple precautions a person can follow to reduce, avoid, and even eliminate their chances of becoming a victim.

There are three locations where a person should be especially alert.

While Driving  
At Home  
While Walking

### **While Driving**

Keep your car in good working order and the gas tank at least half full.  
Park in well-lighted areas and lock the doors, even if you’ll only be gone a short time.  
Before returning to your car look around the parking lot for suspicious persons.  
When you return to your car have your key ready and check the front and rear seats and floor before getting in.

Drive with all the doors locked.

Never pick up hitchhikers.

If you have a flat tire, drive on it until you reach a safe well-lighted, and well-traveled area.

If your car breaks down, put the hood up, lock the doors, and put on the flashers. Use flares if you have them and tie a white cloth to the antenna. If someone stops to help, don’t get out of the car, but roll down the window slightly and ask the person to call the police or a tow service for you.

If you see another motorist in trouble, don’t stop. Help by going to a telephone and calling the police for assistance.

Exercise extra caution when using underground and enclosed parking garages. Try not to go alone.

If you are being followed, don't drive home. Go to the nearest police or fire station and honk your horn. Or drive to an open gas station or other business where you can safely call the police. Don't leave your car unless you are certain you can get inside the building safely. Try to obtain the license plate number and description of the car following you.

## **At Home**

Make sure all windows and doors in your home can be locked securely, particularly sliding glass doors. Use the locks. Keep entrances well-lighted.

Install a peephole in the door and use it.

Check the identification of any sales or service person before letting him in.

Don't let any stranger into your home when you're alone—no matter what the reason or how dire the emergency is supposed to be. Offer to make an emergency phone call while they wait outside.

Never give the impression that you are at home alone if strangers telephone or come to the door.

Get to know your neighbors—someone you can turn to if you're worried.

If you live in an apartment, avoid being in the laundry room or garage by yourself, especially at night.

If you come home alone and find a door or window open or signs of forced entry, don't go in. Go to the nearest phone and call the police.

## **While Walking**

Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you. Keep your head up and look alert.

Stay in well-lighted areas

Walk confidently at a steady pace on the side of the street facing traffic.

Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes, and alleys.

Wear clothes and shoes that give you freedom of movement. If you wear high heels at work, carry them with you and wear athletic shoes to work. You can change when you get there.

Don't walk alone at night if possible. If you have to, be alert.

Be careful when people stop you for directions. Always reply from a distance, and never get too close to the car. If you are in trouble, attract help any way you can. Yell something other people will understand, "Help", "Police", "Fire!"

## **If You Are Attacked**

Keep your head. Stay as calm as possible, think rationally and evaluate your resources and options.

It may be more advisable to submit (this does not mean you consent) than resist and risk severe injury or death. Everyone has different strengths and abilities. You will have to

make this decision based on the circumstances. But, don't resist if the attacker has a weapon.

Keep assessing the situation as it is happening. If one strategy doesn't work, try another.

Possible options in addition to nonresistance are negotiating, stalling for time, distracting the assailant and fleeing to a safe place, verbal assertiveness, screaming to attract attention and physical resistance.

If you think fighting back/struggling may discourage the attack, remember you have to hurt the rapist bad enough to create the time you need to escape. Consider scratching with your fingernails, biting, poking in the eyes, kicking in the knee or groin, hitting on the nose, or jabbing the eyes or throat.

Weapons such as guns, knives, and chemical sprays can easily be turned against you unless you are trained to, and are not afraid to use them. You must be prepared to possibly kill the attacker.

If you are determined to carry some type of weapon, a chemical spray (such as pepper spray) is your best choice. It's non-lethal if used against you. Remember, you already have weapons with you, your keys, pens, pencils, etc. You also have your most important weapon, your brain.

You may be able to turn the attacker off with bizarre behavior such as throwing up, urinating, or defecating.

***REMEMBER, THAT WHATEVER YOU DO, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS YOUR SURVIVAL.***

## **Surviving a Sexual Assault**

Fear, guilt and embarrassment may make it difficult to report the crime and tell those closest to you. After a severe emotional trauma, one needs the understanding and support of family and friends to help get through this difficult time. It is important to realize however, that loved ones do not always know what to say or do to help. Well meaning advice or criticism about what happened is obviously painful. Keep in mind that their reactions can be the result of their own reluctance to accept the reality of everyone's vulnerability to crime. They can only do their best. It sometimes helps if you can let them know what you need.

A traumatic event like this leaves emotions raw and leaves people feeling vulnerable. It is normal to experience dramatic mood swings, to cry easily, to be irritable, or become upset over small things. You may have a startled response if you see someone who looks similar to your assailant or when you see something that reminds you of the crime. It is helpful to get counseling in order to deal with these feelings and to learn about the normal steps victims tend to go through after an assault.

Victims tend to go through several stages when coping with a sexual assault. General denial comes first, followed by a realization phase and then anger.

## **The Denial Stage**

Initially, there may be denial with the victim shutting others out and avoiding the subject. This is often an attempt to believe that the assault did not happen. Disbelief can be protection from the overwhelming feelings associated with the trauma.

## **The Realization Stage**

Denial is often followed by a realization phase where feelings begin to come out. Victims often lack trust in others. Fear of future assaults may cause you to isolate yourself. The most destructive feeling at this stage is a tendency to blame yourself for the assault. Don't blame yourself.

## **The Anger Stage**

Victims usually move next to a stage of anger. This is healthy when your feelings are directed toward your assailant. Sometimes your anger may be misdirected towards those around you. Let them know that you are not angry with them, but rather with what happened to you. The anger can cleanse because it indicates you are beginning to integrate the event into your life and move on without guilt.

## **Looking Ahead**

Finally, you can begin to look ahead. You accept that it was terrible, but you realize it is over.

## **Suggestions**

Report the crime and cooperate with the police. Taking positive action against the assailant will help resolve your trauma. You will also be helping your community.

It is your personal decision who else should be told about what happened. You have a right to privacy and only those you wish to tell need know about the incident.

Express your feelings and needs to those who care. Be clear about what you want them to do or not do.

It is very normal for feelings of fear to linger and these are often difficult to overcome. Do whatever you need to do to be safe. Talk to a counselor about ways to feel safe.

Return to your normal routine as soon as possible. Everyday routine will help you regain a feeling of control in your life.

## ***Reaction of Others***

Your family and friends will also have mixed feelings and confusion over the crime. They may be uncomfortable around you because they may be afraid of making things worse. Common feelings are anger at the assailant, and frustration at not being able to direct that anger at the assailant. Marital relationships can become strained. The victim often feels uncomfortable resuming sexual relations following an assault. Most spouses or partners of the victim can accept these feelings intellectually, but still feel rejected or blamed in some way. Encourage your spouse or partner and other family members to seek help if they are having a hard time adjusting.



## **The Police Investigation**

If an arrest was not made immediately, a detective will be assigned to investigate the case. You will probably be questioned several times in an effort to get as much information as possible about your assailant and the crime. Report any new information on the case to the detective assigned. You may be asked to help with an artist's drawing, take a polygraph or view a lineup. These are investigative tools. Without positive identification of the suspect, prosecution is not possible.

## **Going To Court**

If the suspect is arrested, the suspect may be released from jail on bond or on their own promise to return for court. The judge will order him not to see you or talk to you. You should report any contact by the suspect or by anyone claiming to be the suspect's attorney to the police and county attorney immediately. Your interests will be represented by the County Attorney's Office shortly after an arrest is made and charges are filed.

You may be subpoenaed to testify at a preliminary hearing about what happened. During this hearing the judge listens to the facts to decide if there is "Probable Cause" for the case to go forward to Superior Court. This hearing is not to determine guilt or innocence, and there is no jury. The court process can take many months. This is normal so try not to be frustrated by the delays. Your Victim Assistance case worker is available to give you the information and emotional support necessary to achieve a successful prosecution. Your input and participation will be important at various times to insure a just outcome.

## **Victims' Bill of Rights**

Crime victims have specific rights under North Carolina Laws and the Rules of Criminal Procedure, which insure that the victim will be treated fairly.

To be treated with fairness, respect, and dignity, and to be free from intimidation, harassment, or abuse, throughout the criminal process.

To be informed, upon request, when the accused or convicted person is released from custody or has escaped.

To be present at, and upon request, to be informed of all criminal proceedings where the defendant has the right to be present.

To be heard at any proceeding involving a post-arrest release decision, a negotiated plea, and sentencing.

To refuse an interview, deposition, or other discovery request by the defendant, the defendant's attorney, or other persons acting on behalf of the defendant.

To confer with the prosecution, after the crime against the victim has been charged, before trial or before any disposition of the case and to be informed of the disposition.

To read pre-sentence reports relating to the crime against the victim when they are available to the defendant.

To receive prompt restitution from the person or persons convicted of the criminal conduct that caused the victim's loss or injury.

To be heard at any proceeding when any post-conviction release from confinement is being considered.

To a speedy trial or disposition, and prompt and final conclusion of the case after the conviction and sentence.

To have all rules governing criminal procedure and the admissibility of evidence in all criminal proceeding protect victims' rights and to have these rules be subject to amendment or repeal by the legislature to ensure the protection of these rights.

To be informed of victims' constitutional rights.

A victims exercise of any right granted by this section shall not be grounds for dismissing a criminal proceeding or setting aside any conviction or sentence.

## **The Victim Compensation Program**

The Victim Compensation Program may be able to provide financial assistance for victims of violent crime. The program may pay for the following crime related services: medical treatment, counseling, funeral expenses, and lost wages.

The eligibility criteria that has been established by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Commission is as follows:

The crime occurred in Mecklenburg County.

The crime occurred in North Carolina and the victim/claimant is a legal resident of Mecklenburg County.

The crime was reported to the police within 72 hours after occurrence, unless good cause is shown to justify a delay.

The application is filed with the Victim Compensation Bureau within one year of the crime, unless good cause is shown to justify a delay.

The crime caused physical injury, extreme mental distress and/or death.

The victim/claimant is not serving a sentence of imprisonment in any detention facility. The victim or claimant is neither the offender nor an accomplice of the offender.

The victim/claimant did not contribute to his/her injury or death.

The victim/claimant must be legally present in the United States.

The victim/claimant is willing to aid law enforcement and the prosecution of his or her case.

In some cases, family members of the victim are also eligible for limited services. For further information, refer to community resources below.

## **Community Resources**

- North Carolina Victim Assistance Network (NCVAN) <http://www.nc-van.org>
- National Center for Victims of Crime <http://www.ncvc.org>

- SAVAN (Statewide Automated Victim Assistance and Notification)  
<http://www.ncsavan.org/> or toll-free 1-877- NCSAVAN