

WC SAFE

Advocacy Program

Receiving Medical Attention

Regardless of what your decision is or may be regarding reporting the crime to the police or being involved in the criminal justice process, it is important to receive medical attention to assess your physical health and be tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Your medical professional will also offer preventative treatments for pregnancy, STI and HIV transmission. It is important to be checked and treated for possible injuries, even if none are visible.

Importance of Collecting DNA Evidence

The forensic evidence collection exam is important because preserving DNA evidence can be key to identifying the perpetrator in a sexual assault case, especially those in which the offender is a stranger. Even if you (the survivor) have not decided to report the crime, receiving a forensic medical exam and keeping the evidence safe from damage will improve the chances that the police can access and test the stored evidence at a later date. For this reason, survivors should make every effort to save anything that might contain the perpetrator's DNA and should not:

- Bathe or shower
- Use the restroom
- Change clothes
- Comb hair
- Clean up the crime scene
- Move anything the offender may have touched

Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Collection

This forensic medical exam is complex and on average, takes 3-4 hours. While this may seem lengthy, these medical/forensic exams are comprehensive because you deserve and may need special attention to ensure that you are medically safe and protected.

Medical/Forensic Exam Process

- 1) First the medical professional will write down your detailed medical history as well as your description of the sexual assault. This creates a clear picture of your existing health status, including medications being taken and preexisting conditions unrelated to the assault in addition to clearly recording your description of the events
- 2) Then there will be a head-to-toe, detailed examination and assessment of the entire body (including an internal examination) and may include collection of: blood, urine, hair, and other body secretion samples, photo documentation of injuries and collection of clothing
- 3) The medical professional will then speak to you about treatment for sexually transmitted infections that you may have been exposed to (as mentioned in the first section)

REMEMBER: You have the right to accept or decline any or all parts of the exam.

Under the Violence Against Women & Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, the state must ensure that victims have access to this exam free of charge or with full reimbursement, even if you decide not to report the crime.