

**THERE IS NO  
RIGHT OR WRONG WAY  
TO RESPOND TO A  
SEXUAL ASSAULT.**

When people are afraid, in shock or caught by surprise, their bodies respond in all kinds of ways. They freeze, laugh, go along with it, or they may disassociate (“zone out”). There are many reasons why people don’t fight in these situations. Whatever you did to survive the situation was OK.

If you are a victim of a sexual assault, then you are experiencing a crisis. Like any crisis victim, you will experience feelings that are not within the normal scope of emotions. Feeling guilty or blaming yourself is an effort to gain some control over a situation that was uncontrollable. No matter what the situation:

**THIS WAS NOT YOUR FAULT.**

**NO ONE DESERVES TO BE  
SEXUALLY ASSAULTED.  
NO ONE.**

**Help is Available**

Nebraska’s coalition of domestic violence and sexual assault programs provide access to safety and shelter across the state. To locate the program nearest you, visit [www.ndvsac.org](http://www.ndvsac.org).

Or call:

1-877-215-0167

Línea de Crisis en Nebraska

1-800-656-HOPE

National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-866-331-9474

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline

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Sources of Statistics

1. National Victim Center & Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center. “Rape in America: A report to the nation.” Arlington, VA: National Victim Center, 1992.
2. National Violence Against Women Survey, “Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women,” November 1998.
3. Kilpatrick & Ruggiero, Rape in Nebraska: A Report to the State, 2003.
4. National Victim Center & Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center. “Rape in America: A report to the nation.” Arlington, VA: National Victim Center, 1992.

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TO BE  
SEXUALLY  
ASSAULTED**

 Nebraska  
Domestic Violence  
Sexual Assault Coalition  
402-476-6256  
[www.ndvsac.org](http://www.ndvsac.org)

## Definition

Sexual assault is **any unwanted sexual contact, and DOES NOT require penetration**. Examples include fondling, attempted assault, and rape.

Sexual assault is an attack to inflict physical and emotional violence and humiliation on the victim. It is not about uncontrollable sexual urges. The perpetrator exerts power and control using sex as a weapon. This can be done through force, threats, coercion, manipulation, or by using alcohol or drugs to increase the victim's vulnerability.

Anyone can be a victim: women, men, and children of all ages, races, income levels, levels of education, and from any community. Between 70% - 85% of all sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance - someone the victim knows.<sup>1</sup>

## Medical Care

It may be important to seek medical care after a sexual assault. You can be examined for injuries, some of which you may not be aware of, given antibiotics to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and can get medication to protect against pregnancy. You can also have baseline tests done for other sexually transmitted diseases.

If tests are run for STIs, it's important to have a follow-up appointment with your general practitioner in 2-3 weeks.

Medical professionals are required by law to call the police when they treat a rape victim. **However, the decision to make a formal police report is still yours.**

If you want to avoid the mandatory reporting, you can seek medical attention without disclosing the assault. For example, you could say that you had "unprotected sex" instead of saying "sexual assault."

If you are considering telling the police about the sexual assault, a forensic exam can be done to collect evidence, usually within 24-96 hours from the time of the assault. Staff from local crisis centers are available 24 hours/day to meet you at the hospital or police station.

## Reporting

People are often hesitant to report the assault. Many fear that they won't be believed or that they will be blamed for the assault, particularly if the perpetrator is someone the victim knows.

Others feel that the experience is too personal to share with strangers, or fear that their anonymity will not be protected.

Telling the police about what happened can be embarrassing, difficult and scary. You can ask the police to call an advocate from the nearest crisis center to be with you or you can make arrangements with an advocate prior to going to file a report. If you decide to make a report, it is important to tell the police what happened.

It is not unusual for you to be confused about details and the order of events - a traumatic event often makes it difficult to remember things clearly. As things become clearer, let the investigators know what else you remember.

## Common Misconceptions

**Myth:** Sexual assault is not common.

**Reality:** Sexual assault continues to be a rapidly growing violent crime in America. One of 6 women and 1 of 33 men in the U.S. has experienced an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup>

In Nebraska, over 84,000 women have been raped at least once during their lives.<sup>3</sup>

**Myth:** Women provoke being sexually assaulted and raped. "She was drunk, and did you see what she was wearing? She deserved it!"

**Reality:** Unfortunately, many people blame the victim. The reality is nothing a person does or wears can "make" a person act in a particular way. Each individual is in control of their behavior.

Alcohol is the most common drug used in sexual assaults. Many rapists use alcohol to render their victim more vulnerable.

Any drug can be used to facilitate a sexual assault, even if you take it voluntarily. It is important to recognize that alcohol and other substances do not cause rape, but are used by the perpetrator as a weapon.

**Myth:** It isn't a "real" rape unless there are injuries.

**Reality:** 70% of rape victims report no physical injury. However, 49% describe being fearful of serious injury or death during the rape.<sup>4</sup>