



Sexual assault

Sexual assault is any type of sexual activity that you do not freely give your consent to. This includes:

- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching
- Vaginal, anal, or oral sex that you say no to.
- Rape or attempted rape.
- Perpetrators may use physical force, psychological force, or manipulation to force a victim into non-consensual sex.

{**Note:** The Department of Veterans Affairs uses the term military sexual trauma (MST) for sexual assault or repeated threatening sexual harassment to a Veteran while in the service.}



Sexual assault can happen to females and males. The attacker can be a current or former partner, a family member, a friend, a person you have met, a stranger, or a person in position of power or trust. Rape and sexual assault are never the victim's fault — no matter where or how it happens.

Sexual assault can affect your health in many ways and for many years after the assault.

Problems include:

- Feeling depressed, numb, and/or isolated from others
- Trouble falling or staying asleep

- Disturbing thoughts or nightmares
- Problems with alcohol or other drugs
- Feeling angry or irritable all of the time
- Having a hard time paying attention, staying focused, or remembering things
- Physical problems, such as chronic pain, stomach and intestinal problems, and eating or weight problems
- Feeling easily startled, anxious, and/or nervous

SEEK HELP IF YOU HAVE BEEN ASSAULTED

- Get away from the attacker to a safe place as soon as you can. Then call 911 or the police.
- Call a friend or family member you trust. Or, talk with a counselor at a crisis center or a hotline, such as the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-4673.
- Get counseling from a trusted professional. Contact your doctor or health care provider for advice. {**Note:** Veterans can receive free treatment for military sexual trauma (MST) at all VA health care facilities.}