
Date rape

Summary

- If you have been raped, you can call 000 straight away to report it to the police.
- If you have been raped but you don't want to report it to the police, you can call the **Sexual Assault Crisis Line**, or **1800RESPECT** for help.
- Rape is sex you don't agree to.
- It can happen to anyone – females and males.
- Rape is always wrong and against the law.
- If you are raped, it is never your fault.
- Agreeing to meet someone, even if it is to have sex, does not mean you have agreed to be raped.

The crime of rape is heavily under-reported to authorities, but according to the **South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault** one in four women have experienced some form of date or acquaintance rape. Other research shows that one in five women and one in twenty men have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.

Date or acquaintance rape can be especially common among young people who have had little sexual experience and aren't sure that what they have experienced crosses the line into rape. Many victims of date or acquaintance rape can feel pressure not to report the crime, or feel embarrassed or responsible for the attack.

What is rape?

Rape is sex you don't agree to. It includes someone forcing any body part or object into your vagina, rectum, or mouth.

Physical harm from rape can include:

- broken bones, bruises, cuts, and other injuries from acts of violence
- feeling ill from the effects of being drugged
- injuries to genitals and/or rectum
- being exposed to sexually transmissible infections, such as HIV, herpes, gonorrhoea and syphilis
- pregnancy.

Emotional harm can include:

- fear
- depression
- anxiety
- trust issues
- shame
- embarrassment
- guilt
- feelings of worthlessness
- relationship problems
- difficulty enjoying sex
- flashbacks
- nightmares

- insomnia.

Rape can cause harm in other ways too. For example, some rapes are recorded or photographed. The rapist may upload or threaten to upload these intimate images to the internet.

Date or acquaintance rape is when someone is **sexually assaulted** when they are out with someone they have either met before or are meeting for the first time. Date or acquaintance rape can happen to anyone. Both women and men can be raped on a date, and offenders can be male or female.

Remember, rape is not about two people meeting together to have sex. Rape is a violent act that involves one person forcing themselves sexually onto someone they perceive as less powerful. Rape is against the law, and it is always wrong.

If you are raped, it is never your fault. Rape is always the fault of the person who decided to rape you.

Rape – including date or acquaintance rape – is a criminal offence, which means it is considered a serious crime by our society.

It is illegal for a person to distribute or threaten to distribute intimate images.

Men can be raped too

Both women and men can be raped on a date.

For most men the idea of being a victim is hard to handle. Men usually believe that they will (or should) be able to defend themselves. Beliefs about 'manliness' and 'masculinity' are deeply ingrained for most men. This can lead to intense feelings of guilt, shame and inadequacy when a **man is raped** because they did not fight off their attacker.

Sex and consent

Everyone has the right to set their own sexual limits, and to change those limits as they wish. If someone genuinely cares for you, they will respect those limits and not force themselves on you.

Agreeing to have sex with someone is called giving consent. Consent should be:

- freely given
- reversible
- informed
- enthusiastic
- specific.

You have not given consent if you:

- went along with the sex because of force or you were scared that force would be used
- were held captive
- were too scared to say no
- felt pressured in any way
- were asleep, unconscious or too drunk or under the influence of drugs to provide informed consent
- did not understand what was happening.

How can you protect yourself from date or acquaintance rape?

If you are raped, it is never your fault. Rape is always the fault of the person who decided to rape you.

Below are some things you can do to avoid situations where date or acquaintance rape is more likely to occur:

- Tell friends or family who you are meeting and where you are going to meet them. If you've met online, send a friend the URL of your date's profile page and phone number (if you have it).
- Stay in well-lit public places.
- If the person you meet does not match their online profile, leave.
- Do not go back to their place (no matter what excuse they use).
- Make sure your phone is charged, that it has credit and you have an Uber or taxi fare.

- Let friends know who you're leaving with.
- If your 'gut' is sending warning signals, leave.
- Do not let the person you are meeting pick you up or drop you off at your work or home (they may come back later).
- Do not friend them on social media until you know them well (they may stalk you).
- Don't drink on an empty stomach.
- Be aware of the alcohol content of your drink.
- Pace your drinks.
- Keep your drink with you at all times.
- If you suddenly feel unwell or light-headed, tell a friend or member of staff if you are at a venue.

Why is it important to protect your drink?

It is important to protect your drink to prevent people from adding additional alcohol, or dropping drugs into it. Both of these can increase your risk of date or acquaintance rape.

You can minimise your chances of having your **drink tampered with** (spiked) by:

- opening your own drinks
- not letting other people hand you drinks
- keeping your drink with you at all times
- not sharing drinks
- not drinking anything that doesn't smell or taste right.

What can you do if you're feeling unsafe with someone on a date?

- Trust your instincts. If things don't feel right, leave.
- Don't be embarrassed or feel that you're being rude if you refuse to friend someone on social media, go back to their place, or get into their car. It's better to be safe than sorry.
- Decide on code words to use on the phone that tell your family or friends that you are in trouble. Saying or texting the code word will let your family member or friend know that you can't talk openly and need to be picked up right away.
- Don't be afraid to sound rude if you get a bad feeling about the person you're with. Stay calm, firmly end the conversation and leave. If they get angry or make a scene, ask venue staff for help.
- Tell venue staff things are going badly and you need help. Remember that you do not have to share personal information on a date. Be wary about friending them on social media, giving them details about where you work, where you live or who you live with, even if they tell you their details (they may be lying or have a fake profile).
- If you are worried or nervous about the person you are with, get help. Speak to security guards with nametags and badges; if you're in a public place like a shopping centre or theater, go to the information desk; if you're at a restaurant, ask the staff to call you a taxi or Uber and escort you to it
- Call the police.

What should you do if you've been raped?

If you have been raped, you can:

- call 000 straight away to report it to the police
- call the **Sexual Assault Crisis Line** Tel. **1800 806 29** (Victoria only)
- call **1800 RESPECT** on **1800 737 732** (Australia wide).

If you're going to report the rape:

- Don't shower, wash any part of your body, or change clothes before getting help. This is to prevent you losing valuable evidence that could be used to charge your rapist with the crime.
- Try not to urinate until after you have had a urine test. This test can show whether you have been drugged, although most drugs used in date or acquaintance rape leave your system within 12 hours so it's important to

run tests as soon as possible.

If you report the rape you will be given a forensic medical examination to check your body for any injury, and you will be given tests for sexually transmitted infections. Women will be offered emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy.

If you are not sure if you want to report the rape, you can have a 'just-in-case' medical at SECASA without reporting to the police. This allows forensic evidence to be collected, which will be held for six months while you decide what you want to do.

If you decide, after any period of time, that you do want to report the rape, you can report it to the police at any time in Victoria. Contact the Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT). You can find your local **SOCIT unit** on the Victoria Police website.

If you want to report the rape anonymously you can do this using SECASA's **Sexual Assault Report Anonymously (SARA) website**. Your details will not be passed on to the police without your consent.

Support after rape

The hospital or police can put you in touch with a counsellor or a support group that can help you come to terms with what happened, and find a way to heal. A counsellor can also help you to tell people in your life – such as your parents – what has happened, if that's what you want.

You can also:

- contact the **Sexual Assault Crisis Line** Tel. **1800 806 29** from anywhere in Victoria, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- call **1800 RESPECT** on **1800 737 732** from anywhere in Australia to speak with a counsellor, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you don't want to tell anyone (police or a counsellor at a Centre Against Sexual Assault), it is important that you get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). If you don't have a GP that you trust, you can attend the **Melbourne Sexual Health Clinic 03 9341 6200** for free.

Where to get help

- In an emergency, call 000 (triple zero)
- **Sexual Assault Crisis Line** Tel. **1800 806 292**, Victoria 24 hours, 7 days
- **Centres Against Sexual Assault** Tel. **1800 806 292**, Victoria 24 hours, 7 days
- Your doctor
- **Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT)**
- **National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service** Tel. 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732), 24 hours, 7 days
- **SECASA** Tel. (03) 9594 2289
- **Victims of Crime Helpline** Tel. **1800 819 817**
- **Lifeline** Tel. **13 11 14** anytime – 24 hours, 7 days

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South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault

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