Emotional Concerns

- Shock and numbness -- initially wondering what to do first and who to inform.
- Shame and humiliation -- feeling personal violation and degradation.
- Fear -- that the assailant will come back to retaliate or to sexually assault you again.
- Anger -- both at the assailant and your surroundings.
- Dirtiness -- feeling damaged and perhaps wanting to take a shower.
- Guilt -- feeling the assault was your fault or you should have tried to do "something different".
- Powerlessness and helplessness -- feeling you have no control over your own life or body.
- Distrust -- feeling suspicious of people and your surroundings and being very cautious.
- Fright -- feeling you want someone to be with you at all times.
- Sexual fear -- feeling you wish to stop the sexual relations with the significant person in your life (husband, boyfriend or lover) or that you will never be able to enjoy a sexual relationship again.

For More Information

National Sexual Assault Hotline:
1-800-656-HOPE

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-SAFE

Hearing Impaired:
1-800-787-3224

Printed by the South Dakota Department of Social Services on recycled paper.
May 2012 / Pryntcomm / 5,000 / $0.11 per copy

Sexual Assault:

Information You Need To Know

DSS
Strong Families - South Dakota's Foundation and Our Future

Introduction

Sexual assualt is a serious crime and as a result of the assault, you most likely have experienced emotional and physical trauma and you may not remember or understand all of the information you have received at the hospital involving your medical, emotional, legal and/or follow-up counseling concerns.

Here you will find information about concerns related to an assault along with some after-care suggestions to help you through this life changing experience.

Medical and Pregnancy Concerns

- A follow-up gynecology appointment is encouraged 4-6 weeks after the assault for a recheck of possible sexually transmitted disease(s).

- Contact your physician or emergency room physician if you experience any physical problems or medical concerns related to the assault.

- Take prescribed medications as ordered by your physician. If you experience unpleasant side effects from the medications, notify your physician immediately.

- If you suspect you might be pregnant, contact your physician or the Family Planning Clinic right away.

Legal Concerns and Questions

Below you will find helpful information regarding the law enforcement and criminal justice system.

- The State's Attorney is your lawyer and will not cost you anything.

- The social counselor may be your support person in dealing with the law enforcement system.

- The law enforcement officer will ask you many questions; some may be difficult and unpleasant. Some include: Where were you prior to the assault? Where and when you met the assailant? What conversation occurred between you and the assailant prior to, during and after the assault? What did you do immediately after the assault? Did you tell anyone about the assault? The officer may also ask you descriptions of 1) the type of forced sexual activity, 2) the weapon (if used), 3) the assailant(s) name, race, age, weight, height, hair color/length, eye color, unusual marks, scars, tattoos, rings, speaking/accent patterns, direction of escape and 4) where the assault occurred (i.e. auto license #, make, model and color).

- If and when your case goes to court, the State's Attorney and the police will review the circumstances of the assault before you testify. Even if you and the State's Attorney choose to prosecute, it is conceivable the case will never go to trial because of pleading guilty, plea bargaining or insufficient evidence. In court, the State's Attorney will ask you to testify about what happened to you during the assault. Then, the assailant's lawyer will ask you questions.

- In court, your testimony usually involves the same questions asked by the law enforcement officer as noted above.

- Your sexual history is inadmissible as evidence, unless there has been previous involvement with the defendant.

Emotional Concerns

As a result of the sexual assault, you may experience a wide range of extremely upsetting reactions and feelings. It is important for you to realize that these reactions and feelings are normal reactions that may or may not occur.

Some examples of these emotional concerns and reactions can be viewed on the backside of the brochure.