

## IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT

Sexual assault can happen to anyone, of any background, at any age. **What happened to you was not your fault.** It does not matter what you did (or did not do) before, during, or after the assault. It is okay if you fought back; it is also okay if you did not fight back. You may have felt that you could not move or speak – this is a normal reaction to a very traumatic experience.

Women who have been sexually assaulted react in many different ways. After a sexual assault, there are many different feelings you may have. For example, you may feel upset, sad, anxious, numb, confused, or angry. You may feel embarrassment or shame, but remember, the assault was not your fault.

**All of your reactions and feelings are normal.** They are how you are getting through this traumatic experience.

## FINDING HELP

**VictimLink BC** can help you find information about sexual assault support services near you. They provide help in 110 different languages.

You can call them at any time of the day or night. Their phone number is free and private.

You can tell them as much or as little as you want. This is a confidential service, and you do not have to tell them your name or any other details.

**VictimLink BC**  
**1.800.563.0808**

**TTY:** 604.875.0885

**Text:** 604.836.6381

**Email:** [VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca](mailto:VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca)

*This resource was developed as part of the Western Canada Sexual Assault Initiative, funded by Status of Women Canada.*



Status of Women  
Canada

Condition féminine  
Canada

Canada

# I HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

## WHAT DO I DO?

If you have been sexually assaulted, this resource can help you to learn about your choices and where to find help.

**ENDING VIOLENCE**  
Association of BC



# SEXUAL ASSAULT IS A CRIME

Sexual assault is **any sexual contact that you did not agree to.** (Agreement to sexual contact is called 'consent.')

Sexual assault can include any form of sexual contact (unwanted sexual touching, forced kissing, forced sex). It may have happened to you in the past, or it may have happened recently.

**In Canada, sexual assault is a crime.** It does not matter if you did not fight or say "no." Sexual assault is sometimes committed by someone you know (such as a date, spouse, roommate, friend, teacher, neighbour or family member). Sexual assault is also sometimes committed by someone you do not know (a stranger).

**You have the right to have sexual contact when you freely agree to.** No one has the right to force, bribe or manipulate you into sexual contact. It is a crime for someone to use pressure, force, or threats to make you agree to sexual contact. It is also a crime for someone to have sexual contact with you if you are asleep, unconscious, or unable to agree because of alcohol or drugs.

**ENDING VIOLENCE**  
Association of BC

## WHO CAN HELP ME?

**You are not alone. There are people who can help and support you.** It can be difficult and frightening to tell someone that you were sexually assaulted. However, telling someone you trust or someone who is a professional in this area can help you get support.

**If you have someone that you trust to talk to** (such as a friend, settlement worker or teacher), you can ask them for help. You can also get help from experts that know what you might be going through, why it is so difficult to talk about and what your options are going forward. It is their job to help people who have been sexually assaulted in any way they can. They can help you find safety, medical attention, and legal support.

**To find a support service near you,** phone VictimLink BC at **1.800.563.0808**. They can talk to you anytime of the day or night, in 110 different languages.

## WHAT ARE MY CHOICES?

### GET HELP

The most important step for anyone who has been sexually assaulted is reaching out for help. There are many issues that can arise, such as serious emotional issues, health issues (such as sexually transmitted infections, concerns about pregnancy), and not feeling safe. Please see the section on the back called **FINDING HELP**.

### MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

If the sexual assault was recent, you may be hurt, and you may be worried about getting pregnant or a sexually transmitted infection. It is important to see a doctor or nurse soon, at a hospital or medical clinic.

### FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAM

At most hospitals, you can ask for a forensic medical exam. A nurse or doctor will collect samples from your body and your clothes. This exam should be done within 72 hours of the sexual assault, but you can get the exam up to 1 week later. It is best for the forensic medical exam if you do not shower, eat or drink, brush your teeth, or change your clothes. You can decide later if you want to report to the police.

### NO POLICE REPORT

You can tell someone what happened, but choose not to report the sexual assault to the police.

### REPORT TO POLICE

You can make a report to the police by phone, or by going to a police station. You can bring someone with you for support. A support worker can attend with you.

### THIRD PARTY REPORT

You can make a report to the police through a support worker. The police will not know who you are, but they will know what happened.

### CIVIL CLAIM

You can talk to a lawyer about going to court to sue for financial compensation from the person who sexually assaulted you.