

What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is any type of unwanted sexual activity by someone to whom you have not given your consent. A sexual assault may include use of physical force, touching, or intimidation. Sexual assault is a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Who could this happen to?

Women, men, children and youth in all walks of life can be sexually assaulted. Sexual assault is an act of power and control where sex is a weapon – it is not an act of overwhelming sexual desire. The majority of offenders are known to the victim.

Age of Consent

In May 2008 the legal Age of Consent to sexual activity in Canada became 16. Sexual activity where the age of one person is less than 16 and the age of the other person is 5 years or more above the younger party, can not be consented to by the younger person – making it a sexual assault.

The law includes a "close-in-age exception," meaning 12 & 13-year-olds can have **consensual** sex with someone who is less than 2 years older, and 14 and 15-year-olds can have **consensual** sex with someone who is less than five years older – without it being a crime in Canada.

For more information and support:

Specialized Victim Assistance
@Northern Society for Domestic Peace
250-847-9000
Confidential emotional support and
information

Passage Transition House
Phone: 250-847-2595
Staffed 24 hours per day

BV District Hospital
250-847-2611

Smithers RCMP
250-847-3233

RCMP Based Victim Assistance
250-847-9374

Victim Link
1-800-563-0808
Crisis Line staffed 24 hours per day
Information, support and referrals

Sexual Assault

Knowledge is Power



**For support in Smithers and
surrounding areas, call**

**Northern Society for
Domestic Peace**

**3772-1st Ave.,
Smithers, BC**
www.domesticpeace.ca

Phone: 250-847-9000

What to Do If You Have Just Been Sexually Assaulted

- * Get to a safe place. Your safety is the highest priority.
- * Contact someone who can help you: friend, family, RCMP, crisis line, community agency.
- * Do not shower, drink or eat, douche or change your clothes. Do not clean up the scene of the incident. If you decide to report to the RCMP, all of these things will be important to the investigation.
- * Get medical attention as soon as possible. You may have hidden injuries. You may want to explore options for preventing pregnancy. You should be tested for sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV. If you wish, the hospital will contact the RCMP and a Victim Services worker.
- * Write down everything you remember happening, with as much detail as possible including the events leading up to the attack. This can assist in legal action you may decide to take.
- * Contact Specialized Victim Assistance who can help you think about whether to report to the RCMP, and explore whether Third Party Reporting (which holds your identity confidential) may be an option for you.

You are NOT to Blame, even if:

- * Your attacker was an acquaintance, date, friend or spouse
- * You have been sexually intimate with that person or with others before
- * You were drinking or using drugs
- * You froze and did not or could not say 'no' or were unable to fight back
- * You were wearing clothes that others may perceive as seductive
- * You were alone on the street at night
- * You began making out and then wanted to stop

You are NOT responsible or to blame for the actions that others take.

The Aftermath

- Sexual assault is traumatic, and everyone will respond in a different way. The following range of reactions may help you to know what to expect.
- * Emotional Shock and Disorientation
 - * Disbelief
 - * Embarrassment or Shame
 - * Anger
 - * Guilt or Depression
 - * Powerlessness
 - * Fear and Confusion
 - * Anxiety and Stress

Ways to Take Care of Yourself

- * Talk about the assault and express your feelings to those you trust – choose when, where, and whom to talk about the assault with, and set limits by only disclosing information that feels safe for you to reveal.
- * Use stress reduction techniques – exercise like walking, relaxation like yoga, music, baths, prayer and meditation, journaling, reading, spending time with loved ones.
- * Maintain a balanced diet and sleep cycle as much as possible.
- * Do not overindulge (alcohol or drugs).
- * Seek counseling.
- * Keep your doctor up-to-date on how you are feeling. Be particularly aware of feelings of depression or suicidal thoughts, and tell the doctor.
- * Put a Safety Plan into effect, if that is appropriate. This can include changing the locks on your house, getting a cell phone, installing motion lights around your home, arranging an emergency contact, etc.
- * Arrange for a friend to spend nights with you, or for you to spend nights with them, if you would find this reassuring.
- * Do what you need to, to feel safe.