

If you have been raped, it may be extremely overwhelming to even think about reaching out to get help, but you must get the immediate medical attention you need. To claim justice, evidence must be collected as soon as possible after the assault. Medical evidence is crucial. The longer you delay, the smaller the chance of justice being served.

What To Do Within The **First 24 Hours**

Your first instinct might be to bathe in order to *wash away* the horridness of what has happened to you. However, doing this could wash away any critical evidence that can be used during prosecution. It is not important whether, at that point, you do not wish to prosecute the criminal. What *is* important is that you collect all evidence possible about the rape.

1. ***Get to a safe place.***
2. ***Preserve all physical evidence of the rape.*** Do not shower, change your clothes, brush your hair, eat, drink, douche, brush your teeth or do anything *until* you have had a medical examination. Physical evidence that can be used to identify and capture your assailant can be determined using a rape kit.
3. ***Immediately get a medical examination done.*** A medical examination includes a verbal history of the rape or sexual assault, a mouth vaginal (or anal) swabs/inspection, blood tests, collection of your clothes and underwear, fingernail scraping, and a pelvic exam (if female). A shot of antibiotic is also given in order to ensure you do not contract any STDs, which is followed by a dose of oral antibiotics.
4. ***Write down everything.*** Write down everything you remember, *including* a description of your assailant(s). You might find it difficult to recount the event, but it is important to give all the details so that medical professionals may be alerted about possible injuries that may otherwise go unnoticed. If bruises or other injuries appear later, immediately contact your medical examiner so they may be put on record.
5. If you suspect that you might have been drugged, inform the medical examiner and undergo a urine test.
6. ***If you can, contact the police.*** If you do decide to press charges, get a close friend or someone you can trust to accompany you to the police station to file a First Information Report (FIR). It is a good idea to talk to them right away, when events are still fresh in your mind. Try and remember the date, time, place and circumstances of the assault. If you recognize the assailant, notify the police about their name and your relationship with them. If you are not comfortable with going

to the police station, you can contact any of the various NGOs working to help rape victims; example War Against Rape (WAR) and Aurat Foundation, to name a few.

7. **Talk to someone.** It is vital that you talk about your ordeal, whether with a close friend or a psychological counselor. It is extremely important to have a support system around you in order to get through this difficult time. If you can find no one to turn to, you can always contact a crisis centre such as Bedari and Benazir Bhutto Crisis Centre.

Follow-up Care

It is important to meet again with your medical examiner within a week or two, in order to receive your medical results and also to treat any resulting injuries.

Many rape survivors experience Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS), which is a collection of emotional responses to the extreme stress of the sexual assault. It is vital to get help immediately after a rape or sexual assault,

Some survivors may openly display emotional distress or rage, while others might appear to be calm and detached. Sleeping patterns can change and nightmares are a common occurrence afterward. It is important that you continue counseling or talking to someone close for support, for as long as you need.

Important Things to Remember

IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT! It was *never* your fault.

You *will* survive.