

If you have just been assaulted



If you have just been assaulted you may be feeling many things. Some people report that they feel numb or shocked, confused or frightened or fragile and angry. There is no right or wrong way to feel. It might be helpful for you to know that many people report that these feelings do not last.

Here are some things that you can do:

- Try to be somewhere that feels safe
- You might be in shock so try to keep warm
- See if a friend or someone you trust can be with you
- Talk to someone about what has happened. If you don't feel like talking to a friend or family member yet you can call the Rape Crisis National Helpline on 0808 802 9999 or contact our Helpline (details on our website)

If you want to report the assault to the police there are several ways in which you can do it:

- You can call them on 999
- You can go to your local police station. To find your local station either call 101 or go to <http://www.sussex.police.uk/help-centre/your-local-station>
- You can report to the police anonymously. This is called Third Party Reporting and Survivors' Network can pass information to the police without giving away any details which could identify you. This helps them to see if there are serial offenders. We will always ask your permission before we pass on any information.

If you are not sure if you want to report to the police or not yet you can go along to your nearest Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). The SARC for Brighton and Hove and Sussex is The Saturn Centre in Crawley. They can be contacted on 01293 600469 and their website is www.saturncentre.org. Please call to book an appointment as this is not a drop-in centre.

At the SARC you can have a forensic medical examination, as well as tests for sexually transmitted infection and pregnancy. The SARC should not pressure you into reporting to the police and they can store the results of the forensic examination (or evidence) until you make up your mind whether to report to the police or not. SARCS have specially trained experienced professionals who can give you medical help and advice. They can also support you through the immediate trauma.

If you do decide to report to the police, or if you want a forensic medical examination at the SARC, time is an important consideration. If you want forensic evidence to be collected, you should try and go to the SARC as soon as possible. Also try, if possible, to take these steps:

Do not wash

Do not brush your teeth

Do not have a cigarette

Do not eat or drink

Do not change your clothes

If you do change your clothes, do not wash them and put them in a clean bag

Try not to go to the toilet

Do not clear up anything from the area of the incident

Don't worry if you have already done some of these things. It's possible there's still forensic evidence to collect.

You can also choose to do nothing now. If you feel that it would be useful to take time and to think about the options open to you then that is a perfectly valid decision.

Everyone responds differently to a traumatic event. Whatever you feel is a completely valid response to what has happened. Whatever you do or don't feel now or in the future, talking to a Rape Crisis Centre can help.

The Survivors' Network Helpline runs every week on 01273 720110 for survivors of all genders aged 14+ - you can find dates and times on our website. You can also contact us for counselling, or for support through the criminal justice system. To find out more information and to self-refer, call us on 01273203380 or refer to our website.