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## Protecting yourself from rape

When it comes to a possible rape, there are no right or wrong responses. Often acting on instinct is the best response. If you sense trouble, trust your instinct – rape is never the survivor's fault even if the suggestions below are not followed.

- If you are able to, walk in the company of friends.
- If you think you are being followed, trust your instinct: walk faster, change direction and if necessary go to the nearest house or shop for help.
- Always lock your doors, even during the day.
- If an intruder gets into your home, pretend you are not alone by calling out to someone.
- When you get home, always have your keys ready to open the door; if you think someone is watching you, don't go into your house, but go to a neighbour or try to get some help.
- Don't accept lifts from strangers.

## What is date rape ?

Date rape is when you are raped by someone you know, like a boyfriend or an acquaintance. Women are often raped by someone they know. Date rape specifically refers to a rape in which there has been some sort of romantic or potentially sexual relationship between two people. This is still rape and is a crime. Sometimes perpetrators use drugs to confuse women and make them unconscious. When they wake up, they find they have been raped.

## Protecting yourself from date rape

- Don't get drunk in public or at parties – limit the number of drinks you have, especially if you are alone.
- Always keep your eye on every drink you order – if you lose sight of it, don't drink any more of it. Someone may have drugged it whilst you weren't looking. Don't trust people to order your drink for you.
- If you start to feel lightheaded, nauseous, dizzy or otherwise strange, seek help immediately.
- Use the buddy system. Have a friend you trust looking out for you and you in turn, looking out for them.
- If you feel uncomfortable during a date, but have no transportation, call a meter taxi. It is useful to have a driver's number on your phone so that you can be picked up quickly wherever you are.
- Avoid going into secluded areas with your date until you have known him for some time.

**REMEMBER** Most sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows and not a stranger

## Where to get help?

Firstly at your local clinic and police station.

**POWA – People Opposing Woman Abuse**

tel: 011 642 4345/6 or

email: info@powa.co.za.

Website: www.powa.co.za

**ChildLine: 0800 055 555 FREE (Toll Free)**

**LifeLine: 011 728-1347**

**Choma Magazine**

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Simply send a question via Ask Choma.

**Stop Gender Abuse**

0800 150 150 FREE (Toll free)

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## What is Rape?

Rape is sex you don't agree to, including the forcing of a body part or object into your vagina, rectum (bottom), or mouth.

The rape act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority or against a person who is incapable of giving valid consent, such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated (drunk or disabled), has an intellectual disability or below the legal age of consent.

Rape is not about sex — it is an act of power by the rapist and it is always wrong.

## Dealing with rape

People who have been raped can be traumatised and develop post-traumatic stress disorder that can last a long time. Serious injuries can result along with the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. A person may face violence or threats from the rapist, and, in some cultures, from the victim's family and relatives.

Rape is never your fault, but you may feel shame and guilt. You may feel suicidal and depressed. It's important to get help as soon as possible. You can receive supportive counselling from counsellors and psychologists to help you through the traumatic experience.

## Rape is never your fault

No matter how many people you have had sex with before being raped, no matter how many clubs you had been to, no matter what you are wearing or how often you walk alone at night. **It is NOT your fault.** Even if the person was your friend, ex, current partner or someone you had been having sex with – if you were forced to have sex without your consent, you are not to blame.

## What to do if you are Raped

- You need to get to your nearest hospital or clinic as soon as possible. Do not shower before going to the clinic because the healthcare worker will be looking for genetic evidence used to charge the rapist.
- You will need to fill in a form and your healthcare worker will do an examination which includes evidence collection. **You have 72 hours in which to do this and that is why you must go to the clinic as soon as possible after being attacked.**
- You have the right to be attended to by a health worker and police officer of the same gender as yourself. Such issues are always sensitive and you may feel more comfortable speaking to someone you can relate to. You will also be referred for trauma counselling.

- You need to be tested for HIV immediately. You will get ARV treatment even if you test HIV negative. If you are female and of child-bearing age, you will get emergency contraception to prevent any possibility of falling pregnant. You will also get treatment for sexually transmitted infections.
- You will be contacted by the police and court judge with the options to press charges against your attacker.
- Following the visit to the clinic, you must seek counselling services and support groups as rape is extremely distressing and traumatic. It helps to talk to others in a safe space.

## What to do if you were raped in the past but have never told anyone

- You may have kept quiet because you were threatened. Somebody may have told you they would hurt you or even kill you.
- You may have kept quiet because you feel ashamed or embarrassed.
- You may have kept quiet because you know the person well. Perhaps they are in your family and you don't know how you'll manage without them even if you know what they've done is wrong.

People keep quiet for many reasons. Fear, shame and guilt can stop you from taking action and from ensuring the same doesn't happen to others. It takes a lot of courage to report an abuser, and it's never too late. **The law is on your side.**

Find someone you trust to talk to. A social worker or a nurse or trusted family member.