

# ACQUAINTANCE RAPE BROCHURE

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## What Is Acquaintance Rape?

Acquaintance rape is a sexual assault crime committed by someone who knows the victim. As a sexual assault crime, acquaintance rape includes forced, manipulated or coerced sexual contact. If someone has forced you to have sex, that is rape – even if you know the attacker.

## The Facts ...

- A woman is four times more likely to be raped by an acquaintance than by a stranger.
- The rapist may be a date, neighbor, boss, co-worker, delivery person, repair worker, spouse or anyone else you know.
- It can happen any time and any place.
- One in four college women were victims of rape or attempted rape while they were students. Eighty four percent of them knew the rapist. Fifty-seven percent of the rapes happened during a date.
- Twelve percent of college men reported that they had physically restrained a woman to gain sexual advantage.
- Acquaintance rape is rarely reported to police. Less than 2% of acquaintance rape victims reported the assault; 21% of women raped by strangers reported the crime to police.

If you are a victim of acquaintance rape, it may help if you tell someone about the assault or abuse and ask for help.

The information in this booklet is intended to aid you with the decisions you will be making.

## What Can I Do?

If you have been raped, remember that it is not your fault.

**Rape Crisis Center**

You may want to call a rape crisis center about the assault. A rape crisis counselor will talk with you in person or on the phone. A crisis worker can go with you to the hospital, police station and court appointments.

### **Medical Care**

You may want to get medical attention. The medical staff can examine you for injuries and test for infections and pregnancy. Hospital personnel can also inform you about emergency contraception. If you go to a hospital emergency room within 72 hours, the hospital can collect evidence of the assault.

### **Law Enforcement**

You may want to report the crime to the police and pursue prosecution of the offender.

## **If I Know A Rape Victim?**

### **Support**

If you know someone who has been raped, be supportive. Do not blame the victim. Rape is a crime, and blame belongs with the person that committed the crime. Remember that it is never the victim's fault.

### **Listen and Help**

Respond to what she says she needs – not what you think she needs. Support her in calling a rape crisis center and getting medical attention. If she wants to report to police, offer to go with her. If she does not want to report, respect her decision.

### **Action**

Offer to help make phone calls for her. Offer to drive her to the hospital, police station and rape crisis center. Offer to stay with her during the medical examination and interviews.

## **The Impact**

Rape is traumatic and affects the victim physically and emotionally. Every victim reacts differently to being raped.

In cases of acquaintance rape, the victim's trust in someone she knows has been destroyed. Likewise, her trust in her own judgment about people is shaken. A victim may blame herself. She may think the rape would not have happened "if only"... she had not gone to the party... let him in her apartment... agreed to study at his house... This is why it is so important to be supportive of the victim and to remember the rape is not her fault.

The victim may suffer sleeplessness, nightmares, fear, poor concentration, anxiety, changes in appetite, loss of self-confidence, stress-related illness, grief and despair. She may become depressed and withdrawn. If she is a student, she may transfer to another school or drop out of school altogether.

Many victims may try to forget about the rape. Some victims fear that they will not be believed if they tell someone. Others may not identify what happened as rape. Some victims are afraid to report an assault because they were drinking or using drugs. Often, the victim does not ask for support or counseling as she struggles to recover from the assault.

## **Male Victims**

As a man, you can be sexually assaulted by an acquaintance. You may be pressured or forced into unwanted sex by a friend, relative, date or other acquaintance. If this happens to you, you are entitled to the same services and legal remedies as any other victim.

If you are sexually assaulted, you may fear that your masculinity is in question. You may ask: Why couldn't I protect myself? Has this ever happened to any other man? If the attacker is a female, you may fear that no one would believe your story or that you would be laughed at.

It is important to remember that sexual assault is a crime. You are not at fault. You are entitled to support – to medical care, legal assistance and counseling. You may want to call a rape crisis center for help in getting these services.

## **Why Does It Happen?**

A rapist is a criminal. Acquaintance rape happens because the attacker chooses to force sex on the victim. There are many reasons why he may do this. He may want to control, punish or humiliate the victim. He may believe he is entitled to sex regardless of what she wants. He may think he can get away with it. It is not the victim's fault.

## **What About Alcohol?**

Women should be able to drink or go to a party without fear of rape. This is their right. Women should not be judged differently than men for drinking or going to a party.

If a woman is raped at a party where she was drinking alcohol, she is often blamed for the assault. The rapist, on the other hand, is often not held accountable for his violent behavior. He uses drinking as his excuse: "I didn't know what I was doing."

Unfortunately, women are more vulnerable to sexual assault when they are drinking. To be safer, a woman may want to drink moderately and know her limits. She may also want to ask a friend along when going to a party or bar.

Men can take responsibility for making parties and bars safer for women. Men can stay sober and control their behavior. They can intervene if a woman is being harassed. They can be sure that a woman is not isolated from the group by other men. They can refuse to go along with plans for “getting the woman drunk.” They can help an intoxicated woman get home safely. They can remember that rape is a crime.

## **What About Date Rape Drugs?**

Rapists can use a variety of drugs to make a woman defenseless. GHB and Rohypnol are among the more widely distributed. These drugs are often colorless, odorless and tasteless. They can cause a woman to lose mobility and even consciousness. When she wakes up, the woman may not have any memory of the assault.

Some of the drugs may be used recreationally by women who do not fully understand their effects. Or, someone may slip the drug into a drink that has been left unattended while a woman is dancing or using the restroom.

To protect yourself against a rapist using drugs:

- Go to parties with friends and people that you trust.
- Do not leave your drink unattended. If you do, get a new drink.
- Do not use any unfamiliar substances offered to you at a party.
- If you feel dizzy or disoriented, ask a friend for help immediately.
- If you wake up with no memory of what happened the night before, go to an emergency medical center immediately.

## **The Law**

Acquaintance rape is a crime in Illinois. There is no legal difference between sexual assault by a stranger and sexual assault by an acquaintance.

Under Illinois law, consent is one thing and one thing only: a clear “YES” to the sexual act in question. If the victim does not fight back or escape, the law does not presume that the victim consented. If the victim knows the offender, the law still does not presume consent.

A sexual assault victim can talk with the police and State’s Attorney about prosecution of the case. The sexual assault law gives the State’s Attorney many options for prosecuting sex offenders.

## **Your Rights**

In a relationship:

- You have the right to a life without violence.
- You have the right to reject unwanted attention.
- You have the right to change your mind whenever you want to.
- You have the right to be yourself without changing to please others.
- You have the right to dress or act seductively without promising to have sex.
- You have the right to decide whether you want physical and sexual contact.
- You have the right to start a relationship slowly.
- You have the right to change a relationship when your feelings change.
- You have the right to say “NO.”

## **After an assault:**

- You have the right to medical treatment at a hospital emergency room.
- You have the right to report the assault to police.
- You have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity during the medical and criminal justice processes.
- You have the right to be notified of court proceedings related to your case.
- You have the right to bring an advocate or other support person to all court proceedings.
- You have the right to restitution.

## **Talk to Each Other**

Communication between men and women can help stop acquaintance rape. Being aware of what you want, talking together, understanding each other's needs and respecting limits are all part of the struggle to stop sexual assault. Each person needs to know and state clearly their sexual desires and limits. Women need to trust their intuition. If you feel afraid, say so and leave the situation, if possible. Men must accept limits. A woman means what she says. Don't assume previous permission for sex means she wants to have sex with you again.

## **Men need to Step Up**

A common myth is that women are supposed to stop sexual assault. But it is men's responsibility not to assault women. Men need to take responsibility for their actions. Men need to listen to their partner. Men need to believe that "no" means "no."

Forcing sex means you really don't care about the person you are with. Men should respect a woman's right to not have sex. Men need to help stop behaviors that lead to acquaintance rape. Men should not use or condone the use of date rape drugs and should stop a friend's attempt to take advantage of a woman who is drunk. Men need to speak up to each other and to challenge beliefs that support rape. Men need to stop rape.

**For more information contact your local rape crisis center or ICASA at 217-753-4117,  
[www.icasa.org](http://www.icasa.org).**