

Sexual Assault Forensic Exam Process

Where should I go if I've been sexually assaulted or raped?

It is recommended that you seek medical attention as soon as possible after being raped or sexually assaulted in order to address any medical needs or concerns that you may have. If possible, try not to change clothes, bathe/shower, use the bathroom, or eat/drink prior to seeking medical attention, as these things may destroy evidence of the assault.

Going to a hospital with a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program is ideal. SANE programs have RN's that are specially trained in working with patients who have been impacted by violence, such as a rape. If you arrive at a hospital without a SANE program, the hospital is legally responsible to make sure you do not have any medical needs that must be addressed prior to leaving. You may be billed from the first hospital for the care that is provided.

All hospitals in Ohio are required to provide you with medical care, medications and evidence collection if you wish¹. If you arrive at a hospital that does not have a SANE program, they may recommend going to a SANE program if one is available in your community. If a SANE program is not available, OR if you choose not to go to another hospital and you decide to have evidence collected, let the hospital know that you would like them to provide the evidence collection.

What happens at the hospital?

Regardless of whether you are being treated at an emergency room with a SANE Program or a hospital that does not have a SANE Program, the typical emergency room visit may include:

- Meeting the triage nurse who will take your vitals and ask why you are at the hospital
- Being taken to a patient room to be seen by a nurse and a physician
- A rape crisis advocate should be offered to you. An advocate can provide support to you during the exam
- A health history and an assault history should be taken; the medical professional may need to ask embarrassing and difficult to answer questions, which are designed to provide you with the best exam possible
- A head-to-toe exam to look for injuries, including a visual exam of your private parts
- Should you choose to have evidence collected it can be done at this time
- Medication to prevent any exposure to a sexually transmitted disease
- A pregnancy test may be done, and then medication for pregnancy prevention may be offered
- Information regarding community services and medical follow up
- Discharge planning

What is evidence collection?

Evidence collection (a "rape kit") is a voluntary part of the sexual assault exam. Evidence collection is available up to 96 hours (4 days) after an assault for patients who are 16 years of age or older, and up to 72 hours (3 days) after the assault for patients who are 15 years of age and younger.

Evidence collection involves taking samples from parts of the body that were involved in the rape or may have come into contact with the assailant. The evidence collection process involves swabbing the inside of the mouth, fingernails, skin

¹ Ohio Revised Code 2907.29: Hospital emergency services for victims of sexual offenses. <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2907.29>

and private parts. It also includes taking the underwear and clothing worn to the hospital. The exam should not hurt, but if something does – tell your nurse.

Can my friends or family be with me while I'm at the hospital?

YES! You are able to have a person of your choosing with you during all or part of the exam. If you do not have a friend or a family member with you, OR if you decide that you do not want a friend or family member with you during all or part of the exam, some communities have advocates who can come to the hospital to support you.

An advocate is a person who has specialized training in working with individuals who have been raped. Advocates are also knowledgeable about community resources that are available. For a list of rape crisis centers and organizations that provide advocacy in Ohio please visit <http://www.oaesv.org/rape-crisis-centers-in-ohio/>

Do I have to report to the police?

No. You are not obligated to make a report to the police department. The health care provider is legally required to report to the police that care was provided to someone who reported being raped. The date, time and general location of the assault will be reported.

If you would like to make a report, the hospital can contact the police to come to the hospital and talk with you. If you are too tired or upset to make a report at the hospital, the health care provider can assist you in obtaining a non-emergency number to make your report at a later time.

In Ohio you can have evidence collected with your name, or you can have evidence collected without your name. The evidence collection kit (rape kit) will be given to the police department from the city or county where the rape occurred. All kits should be sent to the lab to test for DNA.

Will I be billed for the emergency visit?

The state of Ohio pays for evidence collection and the antibiotics that are provided to help prevent exposure to sexually transmitted infections, so you should not be billed for those things. You can expect to be billed for any other medications, tests or procedures that are provided separate from the evidence collection. If you choose to not have evidence collected, you will be billed for all the care you receive during your visit.

If you do not have medical coverage the hospital can assist you in applying for medical coverage. The hospital may also be able to work with you in having the charges covered. Additionally, these and other costs may be eligible for reimbursement through the Victims of Crime Compensation Program. Please note that there are eligibility requirements for this program, such as making a report to the police. A rape crisis advocate can assist you with this process if needed.

Is there anything else I should know?

Yes. You are not to blame for your rape. The person who assaulted you is the only person who is responsible. Know that you may have to repeat the details of your assault multiple times to multiple people/professionals. With the exception of mandatory reporting requirements, the care you receive at the hospital is confidential.

For additional information about your rights and about recovering from sexual assault, please visit our website at <http://www.oaesv.org/survivor-resources/>

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