

***WHAT TO DO  
IF YOU HAVE  
BEEN RAPED.***

A ten step toolkit by Rape Crisis

## **1. GO TO A SAFE PLACE.**

Do this as soon as possible. The police can take you to a hospital if you are hurt, or they can call for an ambulance. They can also take you to a forensic unit if you are not hurt but you do not have to go to the police or report the rape if you do not feel comfortable to do so.

## **2. TELL THE FIRST PERSON YOU SEE & TRUST ABOUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED.**

The first person you tell about the rape will sometimes be asked to go to court to support your story – this person is called the first contact witness. If this person is a stranger, write down his or her name, telephone number and address. This is important if you decide to report the rape, as the police will need to find that person and talk to them as part of the investigation of a criminal case.

### **3. GO STRAIGHT TO A HOSPITAL OR TO A DOCTOR TO GET THE NECESSARY MEDICATION.**

You have a right to access free medical treatment at a Thuthuzela Care Centre. You will be given the option of laying a criminal charge at these centres or any hospital forensic unit that see rape cases but you will still receive medical attention even if you do not wish to lay a charge. You should receive treatment for any injuries you might have, preventions of possible HIV infection, sexually transmitted infections and, if you are at risk for pregnancy, emergency contraception. You will also receive emotional support and referrals for counselling at a later stage should you choose to go. Your mental health is as important as your physical health.

#### **4. IF YOU ARE NOT HIV POSITIVE & YOU FEAR THAT YOU HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO HIV, YOU NEED TO RECEIVE MEDICAL ATTENTION WITHIN 72 HOURS (THREE DAYS) OF EXPOSURE.**

It is best to take medicine to prevent HIV infection as soon as possible, with three days being the latest you can still go. They will test you, and if you are HIV negative, the hospital or clinic will give you antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) to prevent HIV infection. The ARVs form part of a group of medicines called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). It is very important that you take the entire 28-day course of medication. The medication might lead to unpleasant side effects, but don't stop taking the medication. You should also think about having another HIV test after three months, as the HIV virus can take three months to show up.

**5. YOU CAN STILL RECEIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT EVEN IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO LAY A CHARGE. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO GO TO A FORENSIC UNIT FOR MEDICAL CARE.**

If you can't get to a Thuthuzela Care Centre then go to your doctor, or any government hospital or clinic. Say that you have been raped and that you want treatment. Aside from possible HIV infection, the rapist might also have given you a sexually transmitted infection (STI). The doctor should put you on a course of antibiotics to prevent this. If you have any discomfort, itching or discharge after the rape, return to your doctor and ask for antibiotics to treat an STI.

**6. ASK FOR EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (THE MORNING-AFTER PILL) TO STOP YOU FROM GETTING PREGNANT IF YOU ARE AT RISK FOR POSSIBLE PREGNANCY.**

This medicine has to be taken within 72 hours (three days) of the rape. The pills might make you feel sick, and you will start to bleed. This bleeding is like a normal period.

## **7. IF YOU DO FALL PREGNANT FROM THE RAPE YOU CAN CHOOSE TO HAVE AN ABORTION, OR TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY (TOP), FROM A GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL OR CLINIC.**

Any woman can get an abortion at a district clinic up to 12 weeks into her pregnancy. Regional hospitals and some private clinics will perform abortions up to 20 weeks if the pregnancy is as a result of rape.

## **8. TAKE TIME OFF.**

If you need time off work or school to recover or to deal with trauma and side effects from medication, ask your doctor or clinic to give you a medical certificate.

## **9. DECIDE WHETHER YOU WANT TO REPORT THE RAPE TO THE POLICE.**

You may not feel like making this decision soon after the rape. The police can be called to the hospital if you want to report what has happened to you. The police can also take you to a hospital if you are hurt, or they can call for an ambulance. Even if you are not sure whether you wish to lay a charge, it is better to have the forensic examination done, so that the doctor can gather physical evidence for you if you decide to lay a charge later.

## 10. A GUIDE TO REPORTING RAPE AT THE POLICE STATION

- Go to the police station nearest to where the rape took place. No survivor may be turned away simply because the rape took place a long time ago or was committed in the station area of another police station. They will open a case, but then refer the case back to the area nearest to the crime for investigation
- You can ask to be seen in a private room at the police station and to give your statement to a female police officer.
- A brief statement should be taken first and translated into your own language. If you are not in a state to have a full statement taken, the investigating officer will make an appointment with you for the following day or within 36 hours.
- You have a right to be treated with respect for your dignity and to complain if this does not happen.
- The police will take you to a medical facility for medical or forensic treatment. These medical units are called Thuthuzela Care Centres.

# IF YOU HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF CRIME, THE VICTIM SERVICE CHARTER SAYS THAT YOUR RIGHTS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

## **1. The right to be treated with fairness & with respect for dignity & privacy**

You should receive services at the police and hospital without having to wait for long periods. Everyone in the criminal justice system should treat you with respect, interview you in your own language and take steps to make sure that secondary trauma is limited.

## **2. The right to offer information**

You are able to give information during the police investigation and the court process. The police and prosecutors should make sure that the information that you give is recorded so that it can be used later. You are able to testify in court about the crime.

## **3. The right to receive information**

You should receive information about your rights and the services available to you. If there is anything that you do not understand, you can ask for it to be translated to your own language. The police, hospital workers and people at the court should tell you what is expected of you and what you can expect from the service. You can also ask for information about the investigation and the case at any point.

## **4. The right to protection**

You have the right to be free from intimidation, harassment, bribery and abuse. If you are a witness in the case and any of these things happen, you should tell the police immediately. The court may also decide that you will provide testimony in a separate room from the courtroom or that your identity is not revealed to keep you safe. In order to ensure your safety, you may be placed in witness protection, if this is necessary.

## **5. The right to assistance**

You can ask for health services, counselling services, legal assistance or any other services you may need after the crime. If you have special needs, people providing these services should try to accommodate you and make sure that you are treated with sensitivity.



**IF YOU CAN'T  
SPEAK TO ANYONE,  
SPEAK TO US.**

**Contact our 24 hour helplines on:**

English: 021 447 9762

isiXhosa: 021 361 9085

Afrikaans: 021 633 9229

WhatsApp line: 083 222 5164

[www.rapecrisis.org.za](http://www.rapecrisis.org.za)

