

## What to Expect After A Sexual Assault

It is common for sexual assault survivors to experience some of the following symptoms in the days, weeks, and even months or years following the assault:

- Feelings of fear, anxiety, panic;
- Disbelief and denial;
- Numbness, going through the motions;
- Isolation or withdrawal;
- Flashbacks of the assault;
- Trouble sleeping at night;
- Nightmares;
- Headaches;
- Dizziness;
- Nausea and vomiting;
- Abdominal pain;
- Mood swings and/or depression;
- Physical pain;
- Anger and resentment.

Your reactions may be different or similar to those mentioned. These are all normal reactions to the stressful experience you have gone through. If these symptoms are preventing you from living a normal life, please call a crisis line or community agency to arrange for counselling to help you cope. Unresolved trauma can negatively influence your current and future physical and emotional health and well-being.

### Follow-up

Specially trained nurses from the SA/DV TC are available to you after your hospital visit. They can provide you with support, community referrals, follow-up testing and treatment.

The phone number is 807-684-6751

**Faye Peterson House**  
807-345-0450 or 1-800-465-6971

**Beendigen**  
807-346-4357

**Assaulted Women's Help Line**  
1-866-863-0511

**Thunder Bay Counselling Centre**  
807-684-1880

**Thunder Bay & Area Victim Services**  
807-684-1051

**Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre**  
807-345-7802

**Thunder Bay Police**  
911 or Non-Urgent Line 807-684-1200

**Crisis Response Services**  
807-346-8282 or 1-888-269-3100

Employee Assistance Program  
through your employer

Together with the community, we are helping to build sustainable self-reliance. Educating, advocating and leading the way to social change.

**The Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centre can help.**

**Call 807-684-6751**



Thunder Bay Regional  
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[www.tbrhsc.net](http://www.tbrhsc.net)

This is a program of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, also affiliated with the Ontario Network for Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres.



Sexual Assault/Domestic  
Violence Treatment Centre

## Sexual Assault Information

A continuum of services inspired by the strength and resiliency of survivors.

Rebuilding lives.  
Restoring hope.  
Reviving the human spirit.



Thunder Bay Regional  
Health Sciences  
Centre

## Remember

You did not choose to be assaulted, but you **CAN** choose what health care you wish to receive. Your consent is required before receiving medications, lab testing, and evidence collection.

## Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK)

Sexual Assault Evidence Kits (SAEK) may be collected up to 12 days after an assault. The evidence is tested by police during an investigation. If you are undecided about involving the police, the evidence can be securely stored by the SA/DV TC for 12 months. Evidence is best collected as soon as possible after an assault. It may include skin swabs of areas where there were physical contact, fingernail scrapings, blood and urine samples. It may also include clothing worn at the time of the assault.

## Pregnancy prevention

Emergency contraceptive (morning-after pill) may be offered to you within 5 days of the assault.

The morning-after pill should not be taken if you are already pregnant. Your nurse will do a pregnancy test before giving you the medication.

You should get your menstrual period at its usual time, or within 21 days. It may cause your period to begin early or the flow may be heavier than usual.

## Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)

The risk of sexually transmitted infections (STI's) after sexual assault is low. Treatment is important as these infections can cause permanent damage to your reproductive system. To help prevent an infection caused by gonorrhea or chlamydia, you may be offered antibiotics.

Your nurse or doctor may recommend repeat tests in the next few weeks, to ensure the medications worked.

Not all people who have an infection will develop symptoms. If you develop symptoms of an STI, such as discharge, itching, odor, rash or skin changes, 1 to 2 weeks after your hospital visit, you can request testing at the SA/DV TC or Health Unit. Rarely, a second course of antibiotics is needed.

## Hepatitis A

Hepatitis a is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis a virus. Hepatitis a is spread from person to person by the fecal-oral route. Infection can happen through eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated. Hepatitis a can be prevented by immunization.

Good hand washing after using the bathroom is the best way to prevent spreading hepatitis a infection.

## Hepatitis B

Hepatitis b is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis b virus.

The hepatitis b virus is found in the blood, semen or vaginal fluids of a person with hepatitis b, and can be spread to others by sexual contact.

Hepatitis b can be prevented by immunization with the hepatitis b vaccine. The vaccine is 90% effective.

You will be offered blood tests to determine if you have immunity to hepatitis b. If the tests show you are not immune, you will be offered vaccination by the follow-up nurse. You will need 3 injections over the next 6 months.

## Hepatitis C

Hepatitis c is also an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis c virus. The virus is found in the blood of the individual who has a current or previous infection and can be transmitted where there is blood to blood contact. This may occur when the skin tissues are damaged during intercourse or intercourse that occurs during the menstrual cycle. A person who has another STI is also more at risk. Most hepatitis c infections are acquired by injection or inhalation drug use and sharing of needles, straws etc. Hepatitis c is rarely transmitted sexually.

You will be offered a blood test to determine if you have hepatitis c.

There is no vaccine for hepatitis c but there is treatment available if an acute infection is detected.

## HIV and Sexual Assault

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that weakens your immune system so your body cannot defend itself against infections.

The risk of getting HIV from a sexual assault is very low. HIV testing is often done because very little may be known about the person(s) who assaulted you. HIV infection may not show up in blood tests for up to 6 months. For this reason, HIV tests are usually repeated between 4-6 weeks and 4-6 months post assault.

Medications to prevent HIV for high risk cases can be given. The medications must be started within 72 hours of the assault and continued for 28 days. These medications often cause side effects, some of which can become quite severe. Side effects may include flu-like symptoms, headaches, fatigue, upset stomach, and in some cases liver and kidney problems. The SA/DV TC offers follow-up care that provides support, as well as further lab testing and monitoring of side effects.