

Article: Preventing Sexual Assault

Unfortunately, there is always some risk of becoming a victim of sexual assault. However, by practicing some protective habits and knowing some warning signs, you can greatly minimize that risk. In addition, adopting a few practices can help ensure that you don't cross the line and become an offender.

This article provides measures you can take to protect yourself from becoming a victim, as well as avoid inadvertently committing offensive and illegal acts.

How do I reduce my risk of becoming a victim of sexual assault?

The following are general actions that can help you to minimize the possibility of being victimized:

- Trust your instinct
- Don't overindulge in alcohol
- Don't assume coworkers or other non-strangers would never harm you
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Avoid isolated places
- Ensure someone knows where you are
- Meet first-time dates in a public place
- Travel and socialize in groups
- Always have money to get home
- Have your cell phone with you
- Take a self-defense class
- Don't prop outside doors open
- Always lock your door

Are date rape drugs a risk?

Date rape drugs, such as Ecstasy or GHB, are drugs that rapists use to subdue their victims, although alcohol is the most commonly used. Some indications that you may have been drugged with a date rape drug are that you:

- Feel a lot more intoxicated than usual after only a few drinks
- Wake up very hung over
- Experience lapse of memory
- Remember taking a drink, but cannot recall what happened afterward

Ways you can avoid an assault by drugging are:

- Going to pubs, clubs, and parties with trustworthy friends
- Appointing a trusted friend to help you watch your drink
- Not leaving your drink unattended
- Avoid sharing or exchanging drinks
- Refusing drinks from anyone you don't know and trust
- Refusing drinks from an open container
- Drinking from a bottle and keeping your thumb on top
- Avoiding drinking anything that tastes or looks unusual
- Seeking help from a trusted friend if you feel really drunk after only a drink or two

Does the use of alcohol increase the chance of sexual assault?

Excessive alcohol use can increase the risk of committing or being vulnerable to sexual assault. Alcohol can:

- Impair judgment
- Lower inhibitions
- Impair ability to recognize potentially dangerous situations
- Increase sexual aggression

Did You Know?

Date rape drugs are easily slipped into a drink at a pub, club, or party and are colorless, odorless, and often tasteless.

Did You Know?

Most rapes involve alcohol use, either by the offender, the victim, or both.

- Make it difficult to resist a sexual assault

Offenders may take advantage of the fact that alcohol or other drugs increase vulnerability. Also, while an individual cannot legally consent to sex if they are drunk, those who are drunk when assaulted often feel responsible.

There are measures you can take to minimize your risk of alcohol-related sexual assault:

- Understand the effects alcohol may have
- Watch what and how much you drink
- Never allow yourself to be incapacitated by alcohol – make sure that you always have control
- Ask a trusted friend or call a taxi to take you home if you are drunk

What are the warning signs that someone may be a non-stranger rapist?

A non-stranger rapist may exhibit the following behaviors:

- Ignores, interrupts, or makes fun of you
- Has a reputation for being a player
- Drinks too much or uses drugs
- Tries to get you to drink or take drugs
- Invades your personal space and sits or stands too close
- Tries to touch or kiss you when you barely know him or her
- Wants to be alone or pressures you to be alone together
- Pressures or tries to guilt you into sex
- Wants to appear strong and in charge
 - Does what he or she wants without asking what you want
 - Becomes angry or mopes if he or she doesn't get their own way

How do I avoid becoming a sexual assault offender?

The following actions can help you to avoid being an offender:

- Ensure your partner consents (and that they can legally consent – they are not incapacitated, drunk, drugged, or underage)
- Communicate your expectations
- Avoid using drugs and excessive alcohol
- Remember that “No means No”

Did You Know?

Over 66% of all rapes are committed by someone the victim knows.