

While the majority of rape victims are women, men have been the victims of rape by other women or by other men. This article is focused on the woman's reaction and protection from rape; however, the information applies to anyone who has been victimized in this way.

PROTECT YOURSELF: KNOW THE FACTS ABOUT DATE RAPE

Every six minutes in the U.S. a woman is raped. Alarming, the majority of these women know their assailants. Female college students need to be educated on this topic, as women between the ages of 15 and 25 comprise the majority of rape victims. In a survey of college campuses across the country, one in four women were victims of rape or attempted rape. Of these incidents, 84% of the victims were raped by someone they knew and 57% of the assaults took place during dates. Furthermore, one in four college men admit to the use of sexual aggression with women.

What Is Acquaintance Or Date Rape? It is a type of rape that occurs after the individuals involved have agreed to social engagement. Rape is defined as vaginal, oral, or anal penetration using force or threat of force. It is an act of violence motivated by power and control. The assailant may be someone you have recently met, just met, or someone you have been dating. In many cases, the assailant does not believe that what took place constitutes rape. Also, the majority of these rapes go unreported, as women are fearful that they will not be believed or will somehow be blamed.

What Factors Contribute To Date Rape? Women can be made vulnerable to rape when they spend time alone with a man. This includes his dorm room, apartment, and even his car. On your first few dates, consider using your own transportation, participate in the planning of the date by recommending places to go, and discuss who will pay for the date. You will not only be asserting your independence; you will also be ensuring your safety. This is particularly important as 71% of rapes are planned. Some men expect sexual activity after spending money on the date, if the woman is dressed provocatively, or if the couple has had sex before. Acquaintance rape may also occur when others are in the vicinity. While at a party, you may choose a quiet room away from the crowd to converse with someone you have just met. This action, however, might be placing you in jeopardy.

Miscommunication also contributes to date rape. A man may misinterpret a woman's flirtatiousness as being interested in having sex. Men may also interpret a woman's protests incorrectly; he may translate her "no" to mean "maybe" or even "yes." If she does not protest strongly, he may believe that he is coercing her, but not forcing her against her will. A man may mistake a woman's desire and interest in kissing and touching to mean that she is interested in intercourse. Women can protect themselves by knowing their sexual limits beforehand and sending clear messages. Women should avoid making decisions about their limits while the situation unfolds.

Misconceptions about male and female sex roles also lead to acquaintance rape. Men are socialized to be aggressive and to "score" in their pursuit of women. Men may also

mistakenly feel that women expect coercion or force in sexual relations. Conversely, women are taught to be polite, passive, and unassertive. These differences in the socialization of men and women lead to misperceptions regarding gender roles and set the stage for date rape.

Alcohol and drugs also play a significant role in acquaintance rape. Statistics show that upwards of 75% of date rapes involve alcohol or other drugs. Excessive use of these substances leads to poor judgment and miscommunication. For some, alcohol consumption leads to increased aggression and a decrease in sensitivity to others. Many victims of date rape will attest to this; while under the influence, many women were unable to accurately assess what was happening or when they did, realized it after it was too late. A man who has consumed too much alcohol or other drugs may find it difficult to interpret a woman's messages. Despite the high number of alcohol and drug related date rapes, it is important to remember that date rape does occur without the use of drugs or alcohol.

Not all date rapes can be prevented. Men plan the majority well in advance. Usually these men have a history of forcing women to have sexual relations. A woman may also be unsuspecting; she may have spent significant time with a man, learned to trust him, and not feel she is in a vulnerable position. Whatever the case, if date rape occurs, it is *never* the victims fault. Though victims may engage in behaviors that increase their vulnerability, they are not to blame if acquaintance rape occurs.

The following is a list of prevention strategies for both men and women. The better educated you are on the subject of date rape, the less likely you are to find yourself unprepared or in a compromising situation.

PREVENTION TIPS:

For Women

- Examine what you want from a relationship and know your sexual limits. Communicate these limits clearly.
- Avoid excessive use of drugs and alcohol. Monitor how much your date is drinking.
- Avoid mixed messages. Say yes when you mean yes and no when you mean no.
- If you are feeling pressured sexually, be direct and firm. This is not the time to be polite.
- Pay attention to nonverbal cues.
- Trust your instincts. If you are feeling uncomfortable, get out of the situation.
- Do not spend time alone with someone until you know him or her well. Try group or double dates.
- If a situation is getting out of control, MAKE YOURSELF HEARD, PROTEST, and LEAVE.
- Be cautious of men who are possessive, show little respect for women, or have hot tempers.

For Men

- Do not impair your judgment and ability to communicate with excessive use of drugs and alcohol.
- If you feel you're getting mixed messages, ask the woman for clarification.
- Don't make assumptions about what a woman wants. Use direct communication instead.
- Communicate your sexual desires openly and early on.
- Some women are unsure of their sexual limits, so pressuring her may be forcing her.
- Previous sexual contact with a woman does not give you permission in subsequent situations.
- If a woman says no to your sexual advances, believe what she is saying and stop.
- Remember that date rape is an act of violence and criminal offense. Using force during a sexual encounter is never acceptable.

What Should You Do If You Are A Victim Of Date Rape?

- The first thing that you should do is contact a friend for emotional support. It is best to talk with them face to face, but if that's not possible, a phone call will do.
- Victims are also encouraged to contact one of the following agencies: Sexual Assault Victims Services (633-1761) or the 24-hour hotline (784-HELP). Both can provide an advocate to assist the victim through this difficult experience.
- Medical attention as soon as possible is also important. The Health Center at Florida Tech, a local hospital, or a private physician may provide these services. Medical care is necessary to document evidence of the assault, test for sexually transmitted diseases, and provide medication for pregnancy prevention.
- Be sure not to shower or change clothes prior to receiving medical attention.
- You are encouraged to report the rape, although this is certainly your decision. The reporting process can be initiated by calling Sexual Assault Victims Services (633-1761), the State Attorney's Office (255-4470) the Police (911) or campus security at 674-8111.
- Whether or not you decide to report the incident, you should seek counseling services to deal with the emotional impact of the assault. Those who receive counseling are able to come to terms with their experience and heal more quickly than those who choose not to get help. Counseling services are available at the Women's Center (727-2200) and the Florida Tech counseling center (674-8050).

Myths

Myth: When a man becomes sexually excited, he must have sex to release the tension.

Fact: He may want to have sex, but he does not need to have sex.

Myth: Women make false reports about sexual assault, especially date rape.

Fact: Women face embarrassment and humiliation in revealing that they have been raped. Most do not lie. In fact, nine out of ten incidents of date rape go unreported.

Myth: Women say “no” when they mean “maybe”.

Fact: Some women may send unclear messages, and men should ask for clarification if they are unsure. “No” should always be interpreted as “no”.

Myth: If a woman is dressed provocatively, she wants sex.

Fact: Looking sexy or appealing does not equate with wanting sex.

Myth: If a woman “makes out” with a man in his room, she wants sex.

Fact: A woman may be interested in kissing or caressing, but that does not mean that she wants to have intercourse.

Myth: It is okay to have sex with a woman who has had too much to drink and passed out.

Fact: It is a crime to have intercourse with someone who is defenseless and non-consenting.

Myth: Women can easily avoid date rape situations.

Fact: Most women are date raped by an individual that they thought could be trusted in an environment that they considered safe.

Myth: Acquaintance rape occurs between individuals who had just met or have recently met.

Fact: It is not uncommon for women to be raped by a spouse, former lover, or long-term boyfriend.

Contact CAPS at 674-8050 should you require any further information or assistance.