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Maryland Crime Watch

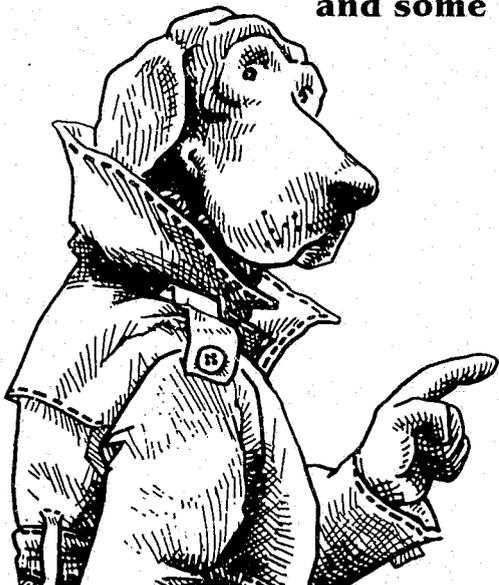


SEXUAL ASSAULT

Anyone Can Be A Victim

"There are a few things nobody likes to think about. Sexual assault is one of them. Some people are too embarrassed to think about it. Others are too scared. Some folks figure they don't need to think about sexual assault—after all, it could never happen to them.

It's important to realize that it could happen, and to take steps to make yourself a lot safer. This booklet will give you the facts and some tips on prevention."



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The Facts About Sexual Assault

Some people have the wrong idea about sexual assault and rape. They think the attacker was overcome with sexual desire, the victim was dressed too seductively, or the victim "asked for it."

These ideas assume that sexual assault is motivated by sexual desire. ***It isn't.*** It is a violent crime, a hostile attack, an attempt to hurt, humiliate, and control the victim. Sex is only the weapon.

Sexual assault includes all forms of sexual contact carried out against the will and without the consent of the victim. These assaults include both the actual use of force and/or the threat of force upon the victim and/or another person(s).

Remember that there is a difference

between consent and submission out of fear. If you fear for your life, your physical safety, or the life and safety of a loved one, you may sincerely believe you have no other alternative than to submit to a sexual act. This does not mean that you have ***consented*** to it; submission is not consent.

The Victim

Rape, a most serious frightening and violent crime against women has always received the primary focus of attention. It is important to remember that other kinds of sexual assault can claim any man, woman, or child, and that the family members and friends of a person who has been raped or sexually assaulted are also victims.

The Situation

Perhaps you think that rape and sexual assault happen only in certain high-risk situations—hitchhiking, walking alone at night, going alone to bars. It's true that sexual assault can happen in these situations. But many sexual assaults and rapes take place in ordinary, seemingly safe places, e.g., grocery store parking lots, libraries, etc. In fact, over 40% of all rapes occur in or near the victim's own home.

The Sexual Offender

It is important to be aware that most sexual offenders don't look abnormal or act strangely. In fact, perpetrators of rape and sexual assault are not always strangers to their victims. In many cases, the sexual offender is an acquaintance, neighbor, friend, or relative.

Sexual Assault Prevention

At Home

- Your obvious hiding places for keys are just as obvious to your attacker. You may want to consider leaving an extra key with a trusted neighbor.
- **Everyone** should use only initials and last names on mailboxes and phone listings.
- Be prepared to enter your house without complications. Have the house or apartment key in your hand.
- If a window or door has been forced or broken while you were absent, **do not enter**. Go to your neighbor's home and call the police or sheriff.
- Install the proper deadbolt locks and a door viewer, and **remember to use them**.
- Make sure that all windows are properly secured.
- Install good interior and exterior lighting for protection. For additional security, use timers to make your home appear occupied when you're away.
- Ask your neighbor to keep a close eye out for any unusual cars or people near your home.
- Trim bushes and shrubbery to remove an attacker's hiding place.
- Never leave messages on your door, since they advertise you're away and the time you plan to return.
- Instruct family members not to answer the door automatically. Before unlocking the door, they should use the door viewer (peephole) and require identification from all delivery and repair persons as well as police officers. As a further precaution, you may want to call the agency which the person says he represents for verification.
- Never let strangers inside your

home to use the phone. Keep the door locked and offer to make the call for them. Also remember not to divulge that you or your neighbor are home alone.

- Use blinds and drapes for privacy.
- If you live in an apartment, avoid going to the basement laundry rooms alone. Consider having a neighbor accompany you or let someone know where you are and when to expect your return.

Contact the police or sheriff's department in your area to obtain a free home security survey.

Using the Telephone

- If you receive obscene or annoying phone calls, hang up immediately. If the calls continue, report them to the police or sheriff and the telephone company.

- If the call is a "wrong number," ask what number the caller dialed; never reveal your number or name.
- Do not divulge any information over the phone to anyone; make this known to other family members also.
- Instruct children that if you are not home, they should say, "She can't come to the phone right now, can I have her return the call?" **not**, "She's not home."

Using Elevators

- Avoid entering an elevator which is occupied by only one other person who is a stranger to you.
- If someone makes you feel uneasy, either don't get in or get off on the next floor.
- Always stand near the control panel.
- If you're attacked, hit the alarm button and press as many floor buttons as possible.

In Your Car

- Always lock your car doors, both when driving and parked.
- Always park in highly visible, well lighted areas, and be mindful of suspicious activity.
- Check the interior of the car before entering, even though doors are locked.
- Have your keys ready to unlock the car door and enter without delay.
- If your car breaks down, raise the hood or attach a handkerchief to the door handle, and stay in the car with the doors locked. If a motorist stops, roll the window down slightly and ask the person to call for assistance.
- Do not stop for a stranded motorist. Instead, go to the nearest phone booth and call the police or sheriff for assistance.
- If you suspect that someone is following you, drive to the nearest public place, police, sheriff, or fire station for help.

- Never leave house keys attached to car keys at service stations or parking lots.

Picking up hitchhikers and hitchhiking place you in an "assault risk" category. Likewise, the offer of a ride home or even a drink from someone you have just met at a private party, lounge, or other public place could be an invitation for trouble.

Walking

- Avoid carrying large sums of money and unnecessary credit cards. Consider carrying only a small change purse with necessities, instead of a handbag.
- If you must carry a purse, don't dangle it by your side in a way that

a thief can run by you and grab it away. Carry the purse close to your body, preferably in front.

- Never leave purses unattended in shopping carts, etc. The contents of your purse, if stolen, can be traced to you.
- Walk on the side of the street facing traffic.
- Walk near the curb to avoid passing close to shrubbery, doorways and other places of concealment. Confine yourself to well lighted areas and avoid shortcuts, such as alleys.
- If a driver stops to ask directions, avoid getting close to the car.
- If a car approaches and you are harassed by the occupants, scream and run in the opposite direction of the vehicle, so that the driver will have to turn around to pursue you.
- Walk with someone whenever possible.
- Always be alert and aware. If someone bothers you, don't be embarrassed to attract attention to yourself. Scream, yell, or whistle.

- Always try to let someone you trust know where you are going and when you expect to return home.

Prevention for Children

Children are especially vulnerable. They are trusting, crave attention, and fear adult punishment. In the vast majority of sexual abuse cases involving children, the offender is known to the child and the child's family. In other words, the abuser is often a relative, close family friend, or parent.

By emphasizing caution, **not fear**, and being understanding and supportive, you can teach your children the following preventive techniques.

- Instruct your children to always inform you of their whereabouts, when they should be expected home, and of any changes in their planned activities.

- Instruct your children that **no one** has the right to touch their body. (Note that a family physician may need to examine them from time to time, and this is an exception.)

- Explain to your children the difference between physical affection and physical abuse. Support your children's decision to refuse to hug and kiss "Uncle Joe" or "Aunt Sally." This will make it easier for them to also say **no** if they should be in an undesirable situation where another relative or "friend" wants to touch them.

- Instruct your children not to keep secrets, especially from you. Before employing a babysitter, if the person is unknown to you, get to know the person and request and **check** references.

- Instruct your children never to accompany a stranger nor anyone they don't trust or with whom they feel uncomfortable. Also instruct them not to accept gifts or other treats from strangers or people they don't trust.

- Instruct your children to look through the peephole before opening the door to a visitor. If they do not know the person, tell them to check with you or an adult who is taking care of them.

- Instruct your children not to take shortcuts through alleys, dark streets, or wooded areas, and not to play in abandoned buildings or new construction sites.

- If your child is going door-to-door for a school or club project, accompany the child and make sure that all business is conducted on the outside.

- Whenever possible, accompany your children to public restrooms. If not possible, be sure to monitor the length of time they are in there.

- Always provide open avenues of communication with your children. If your children come to you with personal problems, don't respond to them with anger or embarrassment. Instead, let them know you will help solve the problem.

Be alert for unspoken danger signals of child sexual abuse:

- **aversion to a relative, neighbor, or babysitter;**
 - **change in eating patterns;**
 - **sudden lack of interest or achievement in school;**
 - **sudden desire for privacy or marked separation from family activity;**
 - **trouble sleeping, waking up with nightmares, or bed-wetting;**
 - **irritation of the genital areas; and / or**
 - **signs of increased anxiety or immature behavior.**
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If you suspect that your child has been sexually abused or approached, report it to the police or sheriff immediately. In a calm, reassuring tone, find out as much as you can about the incident. A child with physical injuries should be taken immediately to a doctor or an emergency room. Sometimes, the

child may need to be treated for V.D. and checked for pregnancy.

Like rapists and sexual offenders, most child abusers are repeat offenders. They don't stop with just one incident. So bring the matter to the attention of your local law enforcement officers or child protection agency (e.g., county department of social services). The court may issue a restraining order so the offender will not be allowed to see the child again. It is important that parents prosecute the offender, because most abusers will not seek help voluntarily. And unless someone takes action, the abuser will not receive badly needed treatment.

Other Problems

Voyeurs must not be dismissed as harmless neighborhood pests. "Peeping Toms" may only stare into windows to satisfy themselves **or** they may be checking out houses in search of their next sexual assault victim. Do not tolerate a voyeur; your responsibility is to notify the police or sheriff and let the officers resolve the situation.

Exhibitionists may only be harmless "flashers" **or** they may be aggressive child molesters or rapists who hurt and humiliate. Exhibitionists often frequent school playgrounds relying on the reluctance of children to report sexual assaults.

Sexual Assault Defenses

What Should You Do If You Are Attacked?

... It depends—on you, on the attacker, and on the whole situation. Without knowing the situation, nobody can tell you what you can do, or what you should do, but there are some things to consider.

Anyone can be a victim of sexual assault. So, you should think about the kinds of defense you would be willing to use. **Now** is the time to consider your options. There is little time to think during an attack.

Remember, sexual assault is a crime of violence, **not** sex. You have to assume that the rapist is willing to use violence. If attacked, your main concern, **always**, must be your safety.

There are several ways to react to a sexual assault.

Submitting To The Attack

In every rape and sexual assault, the attacker threatens the victim's safety or life. Sometimes an attacker threatens the victim's children or other family members. If you believe you might get hurt by defending yourself or if you're afraid to fight back, don't. Submitting to a rape or sexual assault out of fear for your safety or your family's safety does not mean that you consented; it is still a rape or sexual assault, and still a crime. Even if you do not have a single cut or bruise, it should still be reported to the police or sheriff. Victims who do not resist should never feel guilty; it is the attacker who committed the crime.

Passive Resistance

Sometimes a victim may want to resist but is afraid to scream or fight back. In these cases, a more passive type of resistance may help to "defuse" the violence of the attacker. With passive resistance, you can:

- Try to calm the attacker. Use words, gestures, actions, to try to persuade him not to carry out the attack. If you win his confidence, you may be able to escape.
- Try to place the attacker off guard by claiming to be sick, pregnant, or have V.D.
- Try to discourage the attacker. Pretend to faint, cry hysterically, act mentally incapacitated or insane.
- If you're at home, tell the attacker that a friend is coming over, or that your husband or roommate will be home soon.

Active Resistance

Nobody can tell you whether active

resistance—screaming, struggling, fighting back—will be the "right" thing to do. In some cases, it can frighten off or discourage the attacker. But resistance may also lead the attacker to become more violent, or increase the desire to subdue the victim.

There are many kinds of active resistance. Here are some pros and cons regarding the most common ones:

- **Running.** Running can be an option. Consider two factors: Do you have a place nearby to run where there are people around; and can you outrun the attacker?
- **Screaming.** A scream can surprise or frighten an attacker away if he fears that people will come to help. But screaming won't help in isolated areas.
- **Struggling and fighting back.** A forceful struggle also may discourage the attacker. If you are not afraid to hurt someone, and can land a strong kick or hit, fighting back may give you the opportunity

to escape. **All hits or kicks must be forceful and aimed at vulnerable areas, and must incapacitate the attacker.** A hard kick to the groin, a poke in the eyes, stamping on the attacker's instep, or a hard chop against the front of the throat might disable an attacker.

• **Martial Arts.** Martial arts, such as judo, karate, and other defensive tactics can be used to incapacitate an assailant and give you a chance to escape. Martial art forms require limitless practice and effort to become and remain proficient.

Unless you are proficient, you may increase the potential for sustaining injuries.

• **Weapons.** Some women mistakenly rely on items carried in their purse, e.g., keys, nail files, rattail combs, hairspray, etc., to ward off an attacker. If you depend on these, consider the probability of dropping the purse when someone grabs you.

In regard to carrying guns and knives, it is unwise unless you are

skilled in using them, not afraid to use them, and in compliance with Maryland State law. Guns and knives are potentially injurious to you because the attacker might be able to turn them against you.

Chemical sprays have become available as a means of self defense. Unfortunately, they can provide a false sense of security. Consider the following:

- **wind direction is a factor (the wind could blow the spray on you);**
 - **effective range is questionable;**
 - **as with any "weapon," user may be liable for its use;**
 - **the possibility that these sprays may not work on all assailants;**
 - **shelf life of products should be considered;**
 - **must be available in potential victim's hand at all times;**
 - **effectiveness of individual products is questionable.**
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Other Possible Defenses

If you should be in a sexual assault situation and perceive that you are in **imminent** danger of death or severe bodily harm, there are two procedures which are suggested by some prevention experts. Both of these procedures should be used **only** in extreme instances. It should be noted that the opportunity to initiate these procedures may depend on whether or not you have previously antagonized the attacker.

The first procedure, the eye gouge, can be accomplished by: getting close to the assailant (you probably already will be); pretending to caress the assailant's face by gently placing both hands on either side of his face with your thumbs directly in line with his eyes; and firmly pressing your thumbs into his eyes. This will probably blind him and could in fact kill him, but it will also afford you the possibility of escape. A good

thing to consider when initiating this action is that if you have your hands on his face and decide that you cannot go through with the act, you can remove your hands and he probably will never know what you had intended. You may have time to consider another option.

The second procedure, the groin squeeze, should be quite effective and may be easier for a victim to carry out. Again as a "caress," gently slide your hand into the groin area, grasp one testicle, and exert pressure. At a minimum this will incapacitate the attacker, giving you time to escape. As was pointed out in the first procedure, if you have begun the "caress" and realize that you cannot carry out the procedure, you can stop, probably without the assailant knowing what you have intended.

AGAIN, THESE TWO PROCEDURES SHOULD ONLY BE USED IN EXTREME SITUATIONS.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

What Should You Do If You're a Victim of Sexual Assault?

Many victims of sexual assault don't know where to turn for help, or what to do. They may be afraid or ashamed to talk to anybody, or they may try to act as though nothing happened.

If You've Been Assaulted:

- **Do not douche, change clothes, shower, or do anything to change your appearance.** If you do, you may destroy evidence (seminal fluid, hair, clothing fibers, etc.) that the police, sheriff, and prosecutor need to arrest and convict your attacker.
- **Do not disturb the physical surroundings in which the assault took place.** If you do, you may destroy valuable evidence.

- **Do call the police or sheriff immediately and take advantage of any counseling services available to you** (e.g., rape crisis centers).

- **Do get medical help as soon as possible.** The police or sheriff will offer to take you to the nearest hospital or facility which has been approved for the treatment of sexual assault victims. If you prefer, you may have a friend or family member accompany you, and you may have the examination performed by your personal physician. However, it is essential that it be performed as soon as possible after the assault.

Medical Procedures

The medical examination has two purposes: to care for your needs, and to collect medical evidence

which will be used in court when an arrest is made. Because the evidence will be used for proving the crime in court, the State of Maryland will pay for the examination and any other treatment necessary to gather this evidence. If there are other injuries beyond what the state pays for, in excess of \$100, you may wish to contact the Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at (301) 764-4214.

At the time of your medical examination, be sure to discuss with your physician the procedures for detecting, preventing and/or treating pregnancy and venereal disease. Follow-up tests should be made 4-6 weeks after the assault.

Counseling services may be available from sources such as the following:

- Local Health Department
- Rape Crisis Center
- Local Human Resources Office
- Family Doctor

Hospital Clinic
Hotline
Mental Health Professionals
Clergymen

Law Enforcement

Did you know that most sexual offenders are "repeat offenders?" They strike again and again, sometimes assaulting dozens of victims every year.

Law enforcement officers need your help to get sexual offenders off the streets. When you report the crime, the police or sheriff can get valuable information that may help arrest a suspect who has probably raped before and will probably rape again.

Victim Assistance Programs

When a suspect is charged with the sexual assault, victim/witness assistance programs exist in many areas to aid victims during their crisis.

These programs are designed to provide emotional assistance and support through each phase of the court system.

To obtain more information on court procedures, contact: Maryland Commission for Women, 311 West Saratoga Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201, (301) 333-0054, for their free booklet, *Basic Guidelines for Victims of Rape and Sexual Offenses*.

What If You Know Someone Who's A Sexual Assault Victim?

Sexual assault is a terrible experience for the victim—and for the victim's friends and family. If you know a sexual assault victim, you may notice a change in attitude as well as acts of fear, withdrawal, and uncertainty.

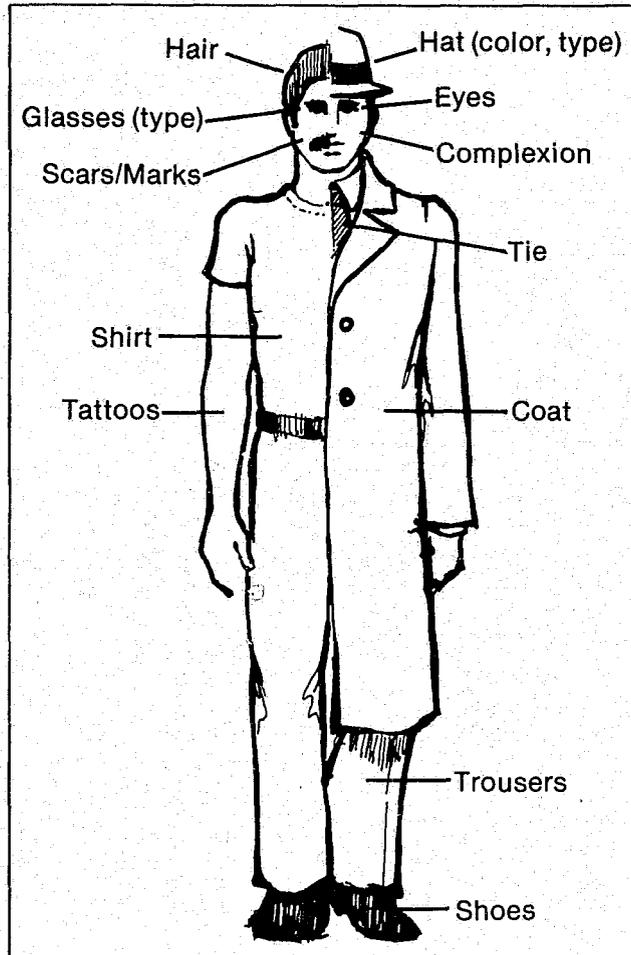
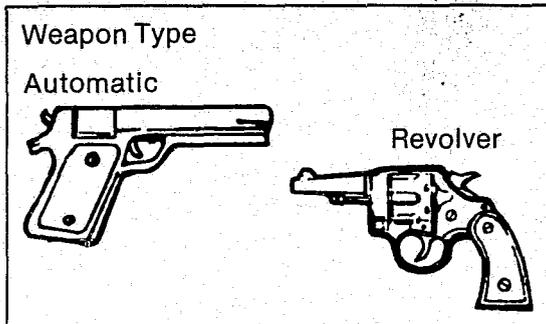
What can you do?

- Show the person that you care.
- Offer to be with the person—who may be afraid to be alone.
- Give your support by being available to spend time with the person, have dinner, go to a movie, go shopping.
- If the person wants to talk about the experience, listen.
- Encourage the victim not to feel guilt or shame regarding the assault.

One final thing. It's important that the victim contact the police or sheriff and, if the attacker is caught, that the victim go through with the trial. The support of friends, family members, rape crisis centers, and victim / witness assistance programs can help the victim through this most difficult time.

Information Most Needed by the Police:

- Description of weapon (if any)
- Car license, make or model, color
- Race of the assailant
- Approximate age, weight, and height
- Hair color and length of hair
- Color of eyes
- Clothing
- Any unusual marks, scars, tattoos, rings, etc.
- Pattern of speaking, accents, etc.
- Direction of escape



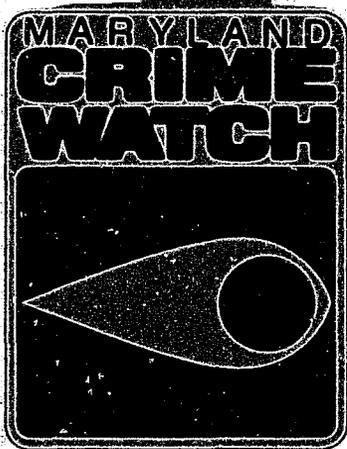


“Now that you’ve learned some facts about sexual assault—who the victims are, where it happens, how to prevent it—why not share this information with your family and friends? Remember, if you reduce your risks and know your defenses, you can help stop this crime from happening.”

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For more information, contact:

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