

Avoiding Non-Stranger Rape

Most rapes are perpetrated by someone known to the victim, and it is often more difficult to avoid this type of attack (as opposed to an assault by a stranger). Still, there are certain things that you can do to try to reduce your risk of being assaulted.

It is important to keep in mind that though these strategies may be helpful in certain situations, there is no way to completely avoid risk. If you are attacked, regardless of whether you took any, all or none of these precautions, it is not your fault. Only the rapist is responsible.

- ▶ Communicate assertively and clearly. Be clear with yourself and the other person about your boundaries.
- ▶ Keep in mind that excessive drinking or drugs impair judgment and communication skills.
- ▶ Do not leave drinks unattended, which could provide an opportunity for someone to drug you.
- ▶ Try to avoid situations or locations that isolate you from others.
- ▶ Make a scene if it becomes necessary. Don't worry about looking foolish.

As *Understanding Violence Against Women* (National Research Council) points out, "avoidance strategies may do little to lower the overall rate of sexual assault; they may simply displace the assault from one potential victim to another." This is why risk reduction is not the same as prevention of sexual assault. Regardless of circumstances, if you are sexually assaulted, it is not your fault and you did not deserve it.

Resources

Rape Abuse and Incest National Network

1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

www.rainn.org

Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Fund

1-800-983-9933

TAASA

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault

6200 La Calma, Suite 110

Austin, TX 78752

Phone: 512-474-7190

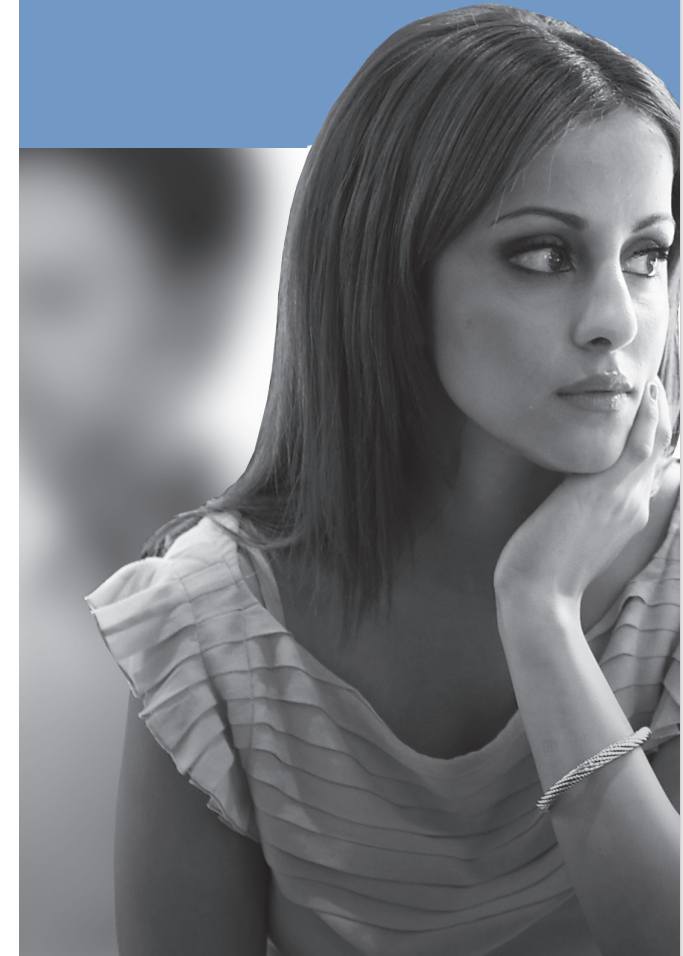
Fax: 512-474-6490

www.taasa.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline
Free. Confidential. 24/7.

1-800-656-HOPE

Non-Stranger Rape



taasa 
TEXAS ASSOCIATION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

6200 La Calma, Suite 110
Austin, Texas 78752
www.taasa.org

What Is Non-Stranger Rape?

Acquaintance rape occurs when someone you know uses force, threats or intimidation to make you have sex.

When a person decides they want to have sex and the other person does not agree, they may use more aggressive measures to assure compliance. This is sexual assault.

If you say “no” and are forced into sex, it’s sexual assault (rape). If you decide not to fight back or cooperate out of fear, this does not mean that you consented. What you chose to do to survive the assault does not change the fact that sex without consent is rape. Meaningful consent is only present when both parties are of legal age and sound mind (i.e., not incapacitated by drugs or alcohol), and agree to sex without any coercion, threats or violence.

It is never okay to force sex on someone else. No matter what, you are not responsible for someone raping you. You are not at fault, only the perpetrator is to blame.

Rape Statistics

- ▶ One in five women in Texas are rape survivors.¹
- ▶ One in 20 men in Texas are rape survivors.¹
- ▶ 1.8 million Texans are rape survivors.¹
- ▶ In approximately three out of four rapes, the survivor knew the person who raped them.²

Common Reactions to Rape

There is no right or wrong way to feel after being raped. People are different, consequently they deal with their emotions in many ways. Survivors will commonly experience these feelings:

- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Shame
- ▶ Shock
- ▶ Loss of trust
- ▶ Anger
- ▶ Worthlessness
- ▶ Self-doubt
- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Helplessness

Most rape victims experience one or more of the following reactions:

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Excessive crying
- ▶ Nightmares
- ▶ Emotional numbness
- ▶ Mood swings
- ▶ Inability to concentrate
- ▶ Panic attacks
- ▶ Sleeplessness or sleeping too much
- ▶ Eating for comfort or not eating enough
- ▶ Sexual problems (avoiding sex altogether or engaging in high-risk sexual activity)

Many victims believe or are encouraged to believe that they should forget about the rape and get on with their lives. This may work temporarily but seldom works long term. Eventually, the burden of suppressing thoughts and feelings about the rape may begin to affect the survivors work and/or personal life.

Alcohol & Drug Connection

Alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, the victim or both has been consistently linked to sexual assault. Researchers have consistently found that approximately one-half of all sexual assaults are committed by men who have been drinking alcohol. Depending on the sample studied and the measures used, the estimates for alcohol use among perpetrators have ranged from 34 to 74 percent (Abbey et al. 1994; Crowell and Burgess 1996). Similarly, approximately one-half of all sexual assault victims report that they were drinking alcohol at the time of the assault, with estimates ranging from 30 to 79 percent (Abbey et al. 1994; Crowell and Burgess 1996).

The cognitive and physical impairments associated with alcohol consumption make it more difficult for victims to successfully resist an assault. A victim’s perception of danger may be distorted and it is more difficult to communicate limits clearly, and a perpetrator may attempt to use this fact as a way to justify their actions to him/herself. In addition, impaired judgment on the part of the perpetrator may increase the sense of power and lead to more aggressive behavior.

The use of drugs, such as Rohypnol (Roofies) and GHB (Gamma-OH, G), makes it even easier to victimize an individual. These and other drugs can be slipped into a victim’s drink without her or his knowledge. To observers, the victim appears to be very drunk and can easily be “escorted” from the public area to a secluded area where an assault can occur. Victims may experience amnesia and eventual unconsciousness for four to 12 hours or possibly even longer.

It is important to understand the risks involved when deciding to drink or take drugs so that you may consider them. Regardless of your decisions, however, you are not at fault if you are raped. Unfortunately, people are sexually assaulted every day, regardless of their personal choices.

¹ A Health Survey of Texans: A Focus on Sexual Assault, 2003

² Lawrence A. Greenfield, *Sex Offenses and Offenders: An Analysis of Data on Rape and Sexual Assault* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 1997).