

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Medical Attention: If you have been sexually assaulted, it is important to seek immediate medical attention for several reasons:

- To assess and treat physical injuries
- To assess and treat sexually transmitted diseases
- Provide birth control information and pregnancy prevention
- You may have been hurt more seriously than you realize
- To assess and treat emotional/psychological trauma

Medical/Forensic Options:

- Evidence collection and notification to law enforcement
- Evidence collection **without** notification to law enforcement
- Medical treatment only

Criminal Prosecution: If you are considering prosecution, you are encouraged to preserve all evidence and to meet with a Forensic Nurse for a PERK (Physical Evidence Recover Kit). The Emergency Services unit at St. Mary's Hospital (281-8574) offers excellent forensic services. Forensic units conduct medical exams, collect evidence from the sexual assault, and as warranted, coordinate with the police.

You are also encouraged to consider possible **R-MC judicial action**.

Time Limits: In a sexual assault case, the physical evidence needed for prosecution is extremely important. Evidence should be collected ideally within the first 24 hours, but no later than 72 hours (3 days) after the assault.

If you or someone else has been assaulted:

- Do not shower, bathe, douche, wash your hands, brush your teeth, use the bathroom, put on makeup, smoke or eat until you have been examined.
- Do not change your clothing. If you have changed clothes, do not wash the clothes you were wearing when assaulted; rather, place in a paper bag. This measure helps to preserve evidence.
- Contact a friend, a family member, Hanover Safe Place (752-2702), or R-MC Counseling Services (752-7270; 752-4710 afterhours) for support and assistance.
- Even if you have showered and done all the above, Forensic Nurses may still be able to collect evidence. In either case, a victim of sexual assault is **encouraged to seek medical attention as soon as possible**.