

Medical Care Available for Sexual Assault Survivors in New Hampshire



What is a medical forensic exam?

After a sexual assault has occurred, seeking medical attention is one option for a survivor.

A sexual assault medical forensic exam is a **resource for all survivors**. There are many misconceptions around going to the hospital after an assault has occurred, but ultimately going to the hospital is about **your health and safety**. Treatment may be essential to ensure that there are no physical injuries requiring immediate care.

Sexual assault exams **can be done on an anonymous basis**. An individual may choose to participate in the exam and then wait to decide if reporting the assault to law enforcement is the best option for them. However, **if you are under the age of 18**, the medical staff **must** report the assault to law enforcement. As long as a mandated report is not required, **YOU CHOOSE** if you want to report the crime to law enforcement.

What does a medical forensic exam include?

Medical attention after a sexual assault is relevant for all victims and anyone impacted by sexual violence has a right to a medical forensic exam. It is important to know that **YOU CHOOSE** which parts of the exam in which you would like to participate and you can **STOP** the exam at any time.

Each part of the exam is optional, but the following will be offered:

- Discussion of your medical-forensic history for the purpose of diagnosis and treatment.
- A head-to-toe physical exam to look for injury or disease.
- A genital exam to look for injury or disease.
- Collection of forensic evidence. This is evidence that can be used for legal purposes, if **YOU CHOOSE** to report the crime.
- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) always prioritize medical evaluation and treatment when providing an exam.



What happens when I choose to get a medical forensic exam?

Adult sexual assault victims have **3 options** when considering a forensic exam. Each of the options below includes a comprehensive medical exam and follow-up care.

- **Reported evidence collection:** Evidence is collected and associated with their name, and they report to law enforcement.
- **Anonymous evidence collection:** Evidence is collected with only a number attached and is then held by law enforcement until/if the victim chooses to report an assault.
- **No evidence collection:** The victim receives only a medical evaluation and treatment. No evidence is collected and no report is made.



Medical Care Options for Sexual Assault Survivors in New Hampshire

Why should I go to the hospital?

There are many reasons why survivors should consider seeking medical care after experiencing a sexual assault.

- You may have internal and/or external injuries that you are not aware of.
- Strangled victims should seek medical care immediately. Strangulation is a predictor for future lethal violence and is a felony in New Hampshire.
- You may have been exposed to a sexually transmitted disease (STD), including HIV. It is possible to contract a STD as a result of the assault and the hospital can provide preventative STD medication (if appropriate), as well as treatment options.
- Pregnancy may be a result of the sexual assault; the hospital can provide pregnancy prevention medication (if appropriate) and a pregnancy test.
- If YOU CHOOSE to report the assault, the collection and documentation of physical evidence is an important part of the police investigation and prosecution's case.
- Staff at the hospital can help connect you to additional resources and services such as confidential advocacy, mental health services and follow up medical care.



How much will a medical forensic exam cost?

You will not be billed for the sexual assault medical forensic examination.

- The NH Attorney General's Office will cover the cost of the exam, whether or not you choose to report your assault. This is true even if you do not have insurance.
- Even if you do have insurance, you can choose not to bill it and the cost of the exam will still be covered.
- If you do choose to go through your insurance, you will not be billed for anything above the insurance coverage limit.
- You will receive a voucher to cover the costs of a follow-up exam.
- Advocates are available to support you throughout the medical exam.
- The crisis center advocacy provided to you at the hospital is free and confidential.
- Crisis centers provide ongoing services that are also free and confidential, should you want additional support.



If you or a loved one are considering going to the hospital after a sexual assault has occurred...

Please contact your local crisis center or call the NH 24/7 sexual assault helpline at 1-866-644-3574 to speak with a confidential advocate.

Remember, going to the hospital can be an empowering experience to make sure you are safe and healthy. You will be connected to advocacy and support services and you do not have to cover the cost of the exam. Also, you will receive a voucher that will pay for a follow-up appointment with your medical provider. You are in control of the entire process and have a right to decline services at any point. The hospital can be a great resource for accessing other services such as mental health care, victim's compensation, medication, and options for reporting to law enforcement, if YOU CHOOSE to report the assault.