

 **Training
by Request**
An OVC Program

Module 5
Impact of
Sexual Assault





Learning Objectives 

- Describe the physical and psychological impact of sexual assault.
- Describe the impact of sexual assault on partners, family, and close friends.

5-2

Activity 

*Brainstorm –
Potential Physical Impact of
Sexual Assault*

5-3

Nongenital Physical Injury

- It is difficult to show how often rape-related injuries occur.
- Most self-protective actions undertaken by rape victims do not significantly affect the risk of additional injuries.
- Less common in stranger rape.
- Further research is needed.

5-4

Identified Genital Trauma

- Rates of identified genital injury vary from significant to no injury.
- Colposcopic (magnified) examination may be useful in distinguishing between consensual and nonconsensual sex.
- Visualization is an invaluable tool that is part of the patient's right to evidence-based medicine.

5-5

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

- Concern about STIs is one key difference between victims who seek medical care and those who do not.
- Risk of contracting HIV is low.
- Risk of contracting other diseases is relatively prevalent.
- Allow victims to make decisions based on facts, not fear.

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Group Process Scenario I
Worksheet 5.1

STI Scenario:

A caller who was sexually assaulted the night before is concerned about STIs, including HIV/AIDS.

- The actual risk is around 5%.
- Medical facilities offer emergency contraception.



- Sexual assault affects a victim's health directly and immediately.
- It also can have a significant and chronic impact on their general health for years.
- Stress appears to suppress the immune system.
- Injurious behaviors and health problems sometimes occur after sexual assault.

Sexual Dysfunction

Sexual dysfunction is a common reaction and often a chronic problem. This may include:

- Avoidance of sex.
- Loss of interest, loss of pleasure in sex.
- Painful intercourse and periods.
- Risky sexual behaviors.

Substance Abuse

- Individuals are clearly more vulnerable to assault when intoxicated.
- The most frequently used drug to facilitate a sexual assault is alcohol.
- Alcohol and drug use by female survivors significantly increased after sexual assault.
- Sexual abuse plays a role in substance abuse.
- Rape victims are more likely to develop substance abuse problems.

Activity

*Brainstorm –
Potential Psychological Impact of
Sexual Assault*

Anxiety

- Rape victims are more anxious than nonvictims.
- 82% of rape victims met criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD).

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Fear

- Death is the most common fear during the assault.
- Continued generalized fear occurs after the assault.
- The threat of violence alone can be psychologically devastating.

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Depression

- Weight loss or gain.
- Sleep disturbance.
- Feelings of worthlessness.
- Less interest in pleasurable activities.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Depressed mood.
- Suicidal thoughts.

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Suicidal Ideation Studies



- Studies indicate suicide ideation after sexual assault is a significant issue.
- Women at the most risk for suicidal ideation were younger, ethnic minority, or bisexual victims.
- Victims with more traumas and drug use enacted more suicide attempts.

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Self-Blame and Shame



- Posttraumatic guilt, self-blame, and shame are a common response following sexual assault.
- Emotions such as fear may increase during the trauma, but other emotions such as shame, guilt, anger, and sadness often increased after the trauma.

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Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



“A psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced (directly or indirectly) or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, or rape or other violent personal assault.”

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PTSD Symptoms

- Intrusive symptoms
- Avoidance of reminders
- Negative thoughts and feelings
- Arousal and reactivity symptoms

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Severity of PTSD Symptoms

- Associated with trauma history, perceived life threat during the assault, feelings of self-blame, avoidance coping, and negative social reactions from others.
- SANEs empower victims through health care, support, treating them with respect and dignity, believing them, helping them regain control; and respecting their decisions.

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Activity

Group Process Scenario II *Worksheet 5.2*

Physical and Psychological Impact Scenario:

A caller who was sexually assaulted 6 months ago is experiencing sleeplessness, weight gain, and trouble concentrating. She is experiencing recurrent pelvic pain, but her doctor hasn't been able to find a physical cause.

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Impact on Partners, Family, Close Friends



- Secondary or indirect victims.
- Often suffer many of the same initial and long-term symptoms.
- May suffer from PTSD.
- May have difficulty supporting the victim.
- Relationship with the victim is affected.

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Individual Factors



- Gender and sexual orientation
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Culture
- Refugee and immigration status
- Past experiences of victimization

Remember that each person will react to assault differently.

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Review of Learning Objectives



- Describe the physical and psychological impact of sexual assault.
- Describe the impact of sexual assault on partners, family, and close friends.

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Questions? Comments?


