Sexual Assault and Rape Among College Students

Sexual assault and rape are defined as any sexual contact without the expressed consent of the victim. This includes any sexual touching without consent, including sexual touching or sexual intercourse, with someone too intoxicated to resist.

Statistics

• Approximately 1 of every 6 US women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime. Approximately 1 in 33 US men has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape.
• College-aged women are 4 times more likely to be sexually assaulted compared with any other age group.
• Most sexual assault victims in college know their attacker.
• Approximately 11% of male college students report raping someone at some point between the ages of 14 through 22 years, investigated in a study in this month’s issue *JAMA Pediatrics*.
• Each year, there are about 293,000 victims of sexual assault.
• About two-thirds of sexual assaults are not reported to the police.

Effects of Rape and Sexual Assault

Survivors of sexual assault are more likely to experience depression or posttraumatic stress disorder as well as contemplate suicide. Survivors are also most likely to abuse alcohol and drugs.

Reducing the Risk for Sexual Assault or Rape

Sexual assault can happen to children or adolescents of any age, culture, or group. There is no foolproof way to protect a person from sexual assault; however, there are steps you can take to reduce the risk. Talk with your child each year of college about campus safety, including these safety tips:

1. Form a buddy system when you go out.
   a. Arrive with your friends, check in with each other during the night, and leave together.
   b. Make a secret signal with your friends for when they should intervene if you are in an uncomfortable situation.
   c. Watch out for your friends. If a friend seems intoxicated or impaired from drugs, get him or her to a safe place and do not let him or her stay behind.

2. Be safe on campus.
   a. Get to know your surroundings and learn a well-lit route back to your dorm or residence.
   b. Try to avoid going out alone at night. Walk with friends or call a safe-walk service if your campus has one.
3. Trust your instincts. If you feel unsafe in any situation, trust that feeling and get yourself somewhere safe.
4. Be careful with alcohol. Alcohol plays a large role in sexual assaults. Talk with your son or daughter about how drinking too much impairs the ability to understand or send “no” signals.

If You Suspect Your Child Has Been Sexually Assaulted

It is hard to know what to do or how to feel if you are concerned your child was sexually assaulted, especially if he or she is away at college. Here are some immediate steps:

• Help your daughter or son seek medical attention. Call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800.656.HOPE (4653) to find a local health care facility near your child that can care for survivors of sexual assault.
• Get support and information. Use the resources below or call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800.656.HOPE (4653) to talk with a trained staff member who can help answer questions and provide resources.
• Support your child. Reassure your child that what happened was not his or her fault and that you will be there for him or her for support.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)

http://www.rainn.org

To find this and other JAMA Pediatrics Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page link on the JAMA Pediatrics website at jamapediatrics.com.