

Sexual Assault Nurse Examinations – Frequently asked questions

A sexual assault nurse examination is a free, voluntary medical examination to provide medical treatment and collect evidence after a sexual assault, as well as provide support and resources. The exam is completed by a team that includes a specially trained nurse and a sexual assault patient advocate. Exams can be emotionally difficult and draining. The forensic nurse ensures you are healthy and safe. An advocate is present to help and comfort you throughout the process, ensure you know your rights, and make sure you have the support you need during and after the exam.

What are the benefits of getting an exam?

- It's free (insurance will not be billed for the costs of evidence collection);
- In our private examination suite, you will receive medical assessment of any minor injuries or trauma related to the sexual assault;
- You will access preventative treatment (prophylaxis) for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, and/or obtain emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy;
- We can preserve evidence and give you time to decide whether you would like to report the crime;
- If you decide to report your sexual assault, a medical forensic exam increases the potential for prosecution and provides an expert witness testimony by the forensic nurse;
- You will have immediate support by a trained sexual assault advocate.

What is a Sexual Assault Kit?

The Sexual Assault Kit contains all of the forensic evidence that was collected during the exam. It can include swabs, hair, nail clippings, injury documentation, and clothing. This Kit is what is released to law enforcement, if you choose to report.

What does the process look like?

1. Consent forms: Because the exam is voluntary, the process begins with signing consent forms to ensure you understand the nature and purpose of each aspect of the exam.
2. Medical History: This includes your medical history just like at your doctor's office.
3. History of the Event: This is where you explain what happened. This part helps guide the physical exam process.
4. Physical Exam: A head-to-toe physical exam. The nurse will look for potential injuries, collect swabs for DNA, take photographs of injuries, and, potentially, perform a speculum exam. This process is guided by the details given of the event. All steps are voluntary and you have the right to decline anything you are uncomfortable with; the nurse will seek your consent every step of the way. **
5. STI and Pregnancy Prevention: Based on the description of the sexual assault, the nurse will discuss potential risks for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and/or pregnancy, and provide options for preventative care and treatment.
6. Discharge & Follow Up: At the end of the exam, you will be provided with information about follow-up medical care and available resources to help you with the healing process. You will also receive a follow-up call within the next day or two, to see how you are feeling and if there is anything we can help you with. What does the process look like? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

**Note - Exams typically last between 1.5-2 hours

Consent is given throughout each step of the process, and you can change your mind at any time.

Do I have to report to law enforcement?

It is optional to release your kit to law enforcement. If you choose not to release your kit to the police at the time of the exam, it will be securely stored at our facility, in case you decide to release it to the police at a later date.

What does it mean to release my kit?

- When you sign the form to release your kit to law enforcement, you will be initiating a criminal investigation. Once the kit is released to law enforcement, our facility cannot get it back.
- If you have not yet reported, law enforcement will contact you for a statement and the contents of the kit will undergo laboratory analysis and forensic testing. Releasing the kit may increase the likelihood that the case will result in prosecution.
- Once your kit has been released, you can track the status and location of your kit using the Track-Kit code that was provided to you at the time of the exam (located in your folder).

What is the criteria for getting an exam?

- Within 120 hours (5 days) of the assault (in some circumstances, up to 10 days);
- The survivor must consent to the exam.

How do I prepare for an exam?

- You can receive a medical forensic exam up to 5 days (in some circumstances, up to 10 days) after a sexual assault, however the sooner it is completed, the better. Our nurses are available 24/7.
- Try to avoid activities that could potentially diminish evidence, such as bathing, showering, using the restroom, and/or changing clothes. However, you can still receive an exam even if you have done any of these activities.
- Place any belongings you feel could be helpful, such as the clothes you were wearing if you already changed, in a paper bag to safely preserve evidence.

What do I need to do to receive an exam?

- Call our crisis line to speak to an advocate about an exam. (580)716-8156.
- Walk into our office during regular business hours.
- If you have any immediate medical concerns, go to the nearest emergency room.

Where will I receive my exam?

- SANE exams take place at the Dearing House.