

Pregnancy as a result of sexual assault



the women's
the royal women's hospital

'Sexual assault' is defined by the Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) as 'any sexual behaviour that makes you feel uncomfortable, frightened or threatened.' An estimated 1.7 million women in Australia have experienced sexual violence.¹

We are mindful that not all pregnant people identify as female and not all perpetrators of abuse are male intimate partners. However, to acknowledge the experience of most patients of the Women's we will use the language 'woman', 'she/her', 'male' and 'he/him' to reflect the statistics at the Abortion and Contraception Service.

At the Women's

We listen to many women's experiences of unplanned pregnancy as a result of sexual contact they did not freely or fully agree (consent) to. We recognise that the crime of sexual assault is one of the most violating experiences anyone can endure. It can have immediate, short- and long-term effects on physical and emotional wellbeing.

Our aim is to help women who have been assaulted and coerced into sexual acts to access medical, clinical, and legal services they may need.

Supporting you in your decision-making

It is crucial that women have control over any decisions if pregnancy results from a sexual assault. Our Abortion and Contraception Service (ACS) or the Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) can help clarify available options and offer support.

Sexual assault and women's rights

Victim/survivors of sexual assault have the right to a full range of emotional, medical and legal support options. CASA and ACS counsellors provide such support, information, and advocacy services.

If you are a victim/survivor of sexual assault, you may wish to report the sexual assault to police. If you terminate the pregnancy, you may ask for forensic evidence be collected at the time of the procedure. To do this, you would need to speak to a police officer before the procedure and CASA or ACS counsellors can support you.

You may also choose not to report to police or not have forensic evidence collected. This decision is entirely up to you. (Child protection laws may affect a young person's rights to confidentiality and privacy. Our service will provide you with information about your rights throughout this process.)

To find out more, talk to an ACS social worker or CASA 1800 806 292.

Support services at the Women's if you have experienced sexual assault

Skilled and supportive female counsellors/advocates and social workers can support you during the initial phone-call to our service. Experiences may be difficult to talk about, but our counselling staff can assist you to discuss as little or as much as you wish. We can help with:

- emotional support
- decision-making support
- information/support with providing informed consent
- counselling
- advocacy
- referral - to CASA House (part of The Royal Women's Hospital), the police, medical staff, other community services
- liaising with Victoria Police/SOCIT (Sexual Offences Crime Investigation Team).

The Women's understands some women will prefer to see female medical practitioners and will do its best to provide this.

If you have an unplanned pregnancy and these or other situations sound familiar, you might find it helpful to discuss your situation with Pregnancy Options Social Worker or a CASA service.

For more information

CASA / Sexual Assault Crisis Line

1800 806 292

casa.org.au/survivors-and-friends

Abortion and Contraception Service
(for patients of the Women's)

(03) 8345 2831

1800MyOptions

1800 696 784

1800myoptions.org.au

Safe Steps - Family Violence Response
Centre

1800 015 188

1800 RESPECT

1800 737 732

1800respect.org.au

InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family
Violence

1800 755 988

intouch.org.au

Police 000

Do you need an interpreter?



If you need an interpreter, remember you can ask for one.

References

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2016 Personal Safety Survey (PSS). Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016
<<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release#experience-of-stalking>>