

Picture Guide to the Medical Exam after Sexual Assault

Created by Accessing Safety in Hennepin County

This project was supported by Grant No. 2013-FW-AX-K004, awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

Introduction

This guide:

- Explains what happens in an exam
- Is a support tool for learning about sexual assault exams
- Can be read alone or with support

When getting help, the most important things to know are:

- Sexual assault is never your fault
- You are brave for reaching out for help
- You can say “yes” or “no” to any part of the exam
- You control what information you share with medical staff

The nurse might have to report what happened to the police if you are a vulnerable adult according to Minnesota law. The nurse will tell you if they have to talk to the police.

People in the Room:



Nurse and Advocate

REMINDER OF RIGHTS

You always control your exam. During your exam, you also have the right to:

- Ask questions
- Say yes or no
- Ask for help
- Respect and dignity
- Take breaks or stop the exam

Step 1: You check in for a free sexual assault exam.

Checking in at the front desk means filling out forms, showing your ID and medical cards, and sharing that you were hurt.

You can ask about any extra costs. The nurse or hospital staff should be able to answer any questions.



Step 2: You can wait in your own room for your nurse and advocate to come.

Your exam can take a few hours to see if you are okay and collect evidence.



Step 3: Your Sexual Violence Center advocate can be with you. You decide if your advocate stays or leaves.

Advocates answer your questions, offer resources, and follow what you want.

You know what is best for you. Getting hurt was not your fault.



Step 4: A specially trained nurse will tell you who they are and offer options for your exam. You will guide the exam by saying what options you want.

During the exam, the nurse will collect evidence.

Evidence is anything left on you from the person who hurt you that can identify the person and help explain what happened.



Step 5: There is a consent form you must sign to have the exam. You will need to sign a paper to say you want to have the exam. If you have a guardian, your guardian does not need to sign the form. The nurse can help you read and sign if you need support.

You still get to choose what parts of the exam you want.



Step 6: If you have someone who supports you when you go to the doctor, you can tell the nurse. The nurse can help you contact that person. You decide who is in the room with you.



Step 7: The nurse will ask you to answer questions about your health and how you were hurt. You decide what to tell them.

We believe you.

Your information guides how the nurse will offer care during the exam.



Step 8: You can choose to talk to the police. A police officer will help make a report about how you were hurt.



Step 9: The nurse will open a box in front of you with items to collect evidence.



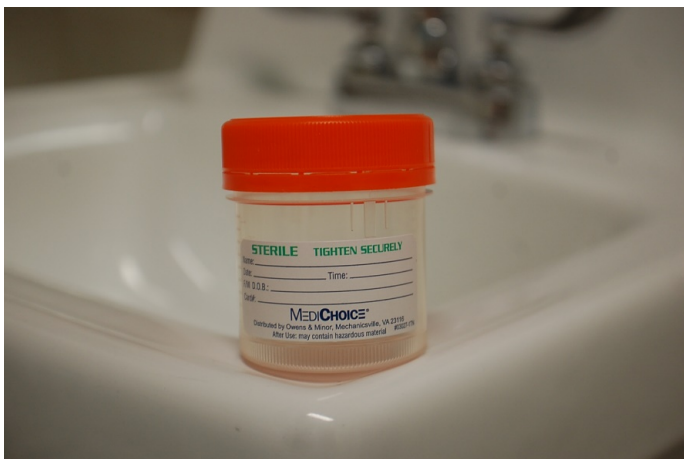
Step 10: What you use to help yourself might be checked for evidence. This could be things like a cane or walker.



Step 11: The nurse may ask to take a blood sample. You can say yes or no.



You will also be asked to go to the bathroom to pee in a cup. You can say yes or no.



Step 12: Some of your clothes can be put in paper bags if you were wearing the same clothes when you were hurt. You can decide to give your clothes or keep your clothes. If you give the nurse your clothes for evidence, you will not get them back.

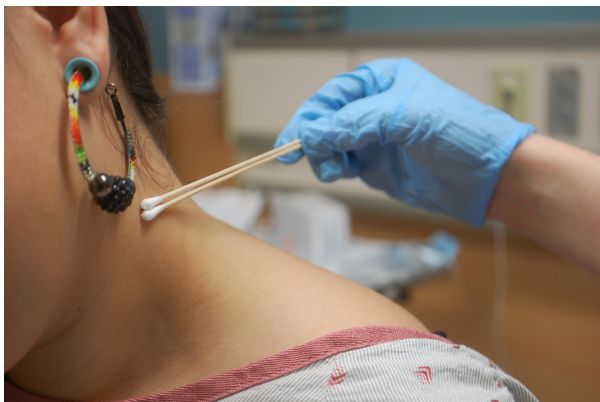


If your clothes will be kept for evidence, the nurse will give you other clothes to wear.

Step 13: The nurse might ask to rub the inside of your mouth with cotton swabs. You can say yes or no.



The nurse may swab other areas of your body and scrape under your fingernails. You can say yes or no.



Step 14: Sometimes, a special light can be used to look for evidence. If an area glows, the nurse will use cotton swabs on that spot.

The nurse will tell you if this might be part of your exam.

The room lights will be turned off if the nurse needs to use the light. You can say yes or no.



Step 15: The nurse will check your body to see if you are physically hurt.

You can tell the nurse if you feel any pain.



Step 16: The nurse will use a hospital camera to take pictures of injuries such as bruises or cuts.

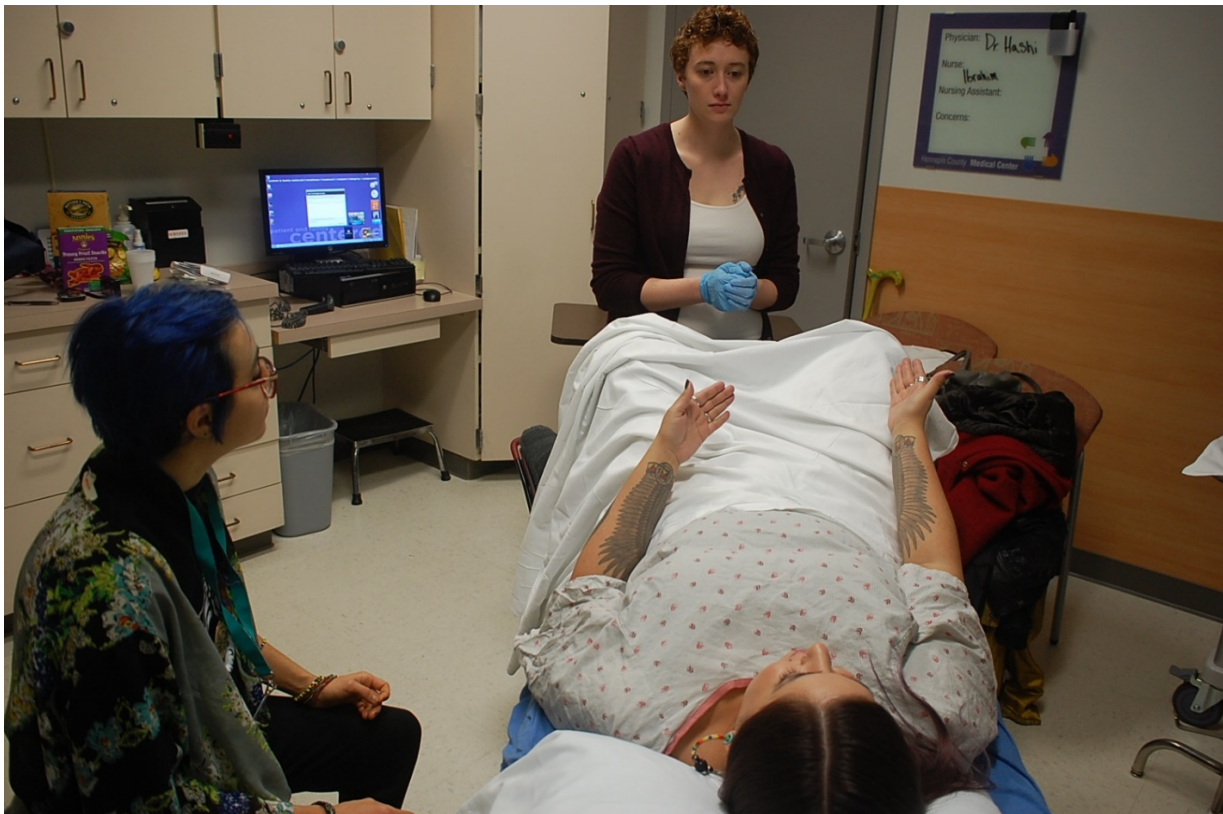
Many pictures will be taken of the same spot to show size, so this part may feel like it takes a long time. You can say yes or no.



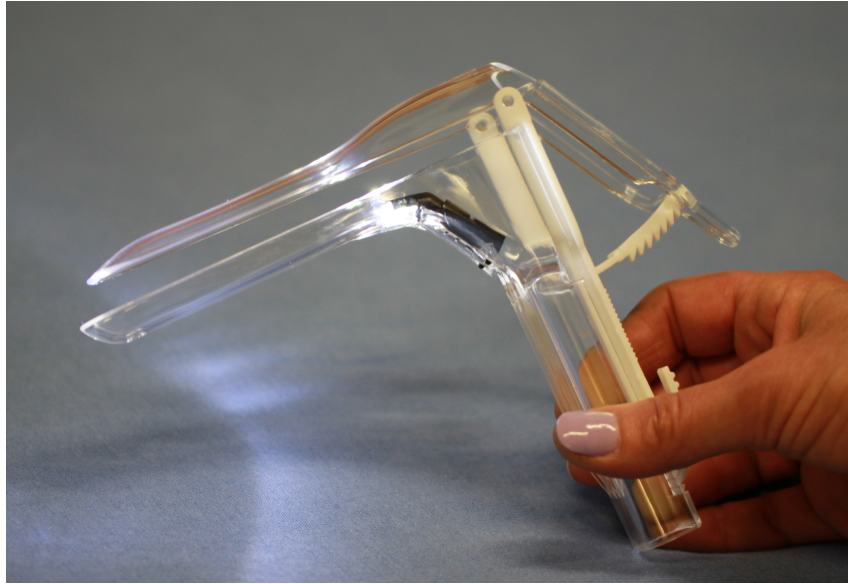
Step 17: The nurse may look at your genitals for injury and evidence.

The nurse will tell you when and where they will touch you. It is okay to take a break or stop.

You can tell the advocate where you want them to sit.



Step 18: If you have a vagina, the nurse will ask to look inside your vagina. Then, the nurse will gently put a speculum inside of your vagina to see if you are okay.



The nurse may ask you to lie back and come down to the end of the table. You can say what is comfortable for you. The nurse will support you to make your exam happen.

Step 19: You can be given medications to try to stop sexually transmitted infections. Sexually transmitted infections are when people get sick after being touched by body parts used for sex.

You may also be offered medication to prevent a pregnancy. You can become pregnant when someone forces you to have sex.

Let the nurse know what other medicines you take.

Some medications you will take at the hospital and other medications you will get at a pharmacy.



Step 20: Your advocate will give you information on free support services at the Sexual Violence Center.

Services are available for you, and your family and friends.

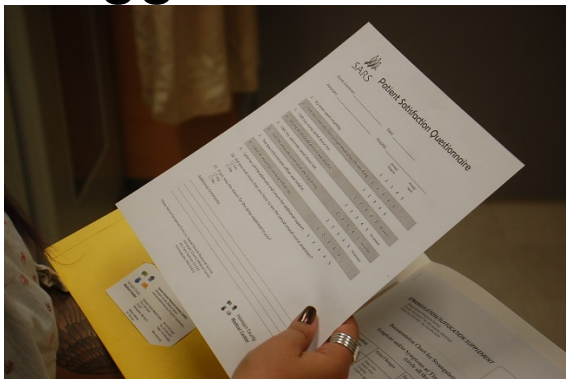


Step 21: A doctor may ask to see you before you leave. Then, a nurse will check you out of the hospital.



You will get a list of:

- what was done at the hospital
- medications given and reasons for taking them
- actions to take care of yourself
- suggestions for any follow-up



Step 22: Thank you for being brave and sharing your story. You can ask any questions to the nurse or advocate.

You are in control of your healing.



Accessing Safety in Hennepin County would like to thank the following organizations for their help with this picture guide:

Illinois Imagines
Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC)
Sexual Assault Response nurses of Hennepin County
The Arc Greater Twin Cities' Self-Advocacy Advisory Committee