



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

SEXUAL ASSAULT OVERSEAS



smartraveller.gov.au

Every traveller, every trip.

Contents

Tips to avoid becoming a victim of sexual assault	1
What to do if you're assaulted	1
How can family and friends help?	2
How do Australian consular staff provide support?	3
Getting help	4

Sexual assault is a traumatic experience for anyone, particularly when travelling overseas and away from home. It can also be a distressing experience for families and friends. This publication is designed to provide advice on how to avoid becoming a victim of sexual assault, and to provide advice to victims of sexual assault and their families if it does happen while overseas.

Sexual assault can happen anywhere to anyone. Sexual assault is an act of violence. It violates a person's sense of safety and control and can leave them feeling powerless and dishonoured.

Perpetrators of sexual assault may use drugs, threats, power, force and manipulation to attempt to control another person's body, senses and emotions.

Assaults can happen to both men and women when travelling overseas, and in most cases, the perpetrator is a stranger.

Tips to avoid becoming a victim of sexual assault

- Be aware of your surroundings and if you feel uncomfortable, leave.
- Avoid walking alone or through poorly lit areas at night.
- Do not leave your drink unattended in public spaces.
- If any doors or windows to your accommodation are broken, do not enter. Instead contact the police.
- Avoid going into back rooms of shops where you cannot see the street.
- When travelling overseas, be cautious of unsolicited invitations from strangers.
- Be aware that women travelling alone can attract unwelcome attention.
- In some countries, conservative standards of dress and behaviour can apply. It may be advisable to avoid wearing revealing clothing.
- If attacked, scream to draw attention.

What to do if you're assaulted

First, make sure you won't be assaulted again by going to a safe location.

If possible, find someone you know and trust to support you. This will be a difficult time and you need to be in control of decisions that are made relating to the assault. Being sexually assaulted can cause people to feel powerless, so it's essential that you have support and can make decisions that are right for you. Remember, you are in control of the response.

Sexual assault is never the victim's fault. Try not to blame yourself. The perpetrator is the only one responsible for the assault. No one deserves to be raped or assaulted.

Consider contacting the nearest sexual assault service or crisis line to discuss what happened. If you're not sure what services may be available, contact the nearest Australian embassy, high commission or consulate for assistance. Contact details are available at dfat.gov.au/missions. Seek information and advice about your safety, medical issues, legal concerns and the steps associated with reporting the assault in your location.

You can also contact the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre in Canberra from anywhere in the world on **+61 2 6261 3305**. If you're in need of counselling, the centre can transfer you to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

Get immediate medical assistance. You may have injuries or other concerns, such as sexually transmissible infections or pregnancy. Doctors can offer advice, testing, treatment and assistance with emergency contraception. In particular, ask about post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV/AIDS. An early medical examination may provide important evidence if you decide to report the assault. In most countries, medical staff may also assist you to contact police or other authorities.

Decide whether to report the assault to the police. Sexual assault is a crime and support options are available through police and the legal system. If it's a recent rape or sexual assault and you are considering filing a report, it's best for forensic evidence if medical samples are taken within 72 hours. The evidence is most effectively collected if the person goes straight to the hospital after an assault without bathing, changing clothes or washing or discarding anything that could potentially be used as evidence.

Consider undergoing counselling with a supportive and experienced counsellor. Counselling can provide you with a safe, private place to talk with someone who will listen. It's not uncommon for people to try a few counsellors before they find someone with whom they feel comfortable.

How can family and friends help?

- Always believe victims of sexual assault and reassure them it's not their fault.
- Try and offer them a safe environment.
- Don't blame the victim.

- Don't push the victim to make quick decisions. Let them decide the pace in which they want to talk about the experience. It takes time to open up, even to family members, after a traumatic experience. Listen, be patient and supportive.

How do Australian consular staff provide support?

Australian consular staff can:

- support you in seeking medical assistance and reporting the crime to the police
- contact relatives or friends (we will not contact anyone without your consent)
- provide a list of doctors and lawyers and explain legal processes in general terms
- contact or provide a list of counselling services, locally (if available) or in Australia
- provide a Travellers Emergency Loan (emergency access to funds) if required
- help you to find accommodation, arrange flights home and contact your travel insurer.

Important things to consider

- In many countries, victims might not find the same level of support as they would expect in Australia. You might need to contact friends or family for additional support.
- Consular staff cannot make decisions for victims but, as they are aware of local conditions, they should be able to provide you with information and help you to examine your options.
- Consular staff cannot force local authorities to act when they are unwilling to do so but can make representations on a victim's behalf where appropriate.

- Consular staff cannot represent a victim at a trial. Only a lawyer can provide this service and should have access to information held by the magistrate concerning the case.
- Depending on local regulations and work priorities, consular staff may attend judicial proceedings as an observer to emphasise the Australian Government's interest in the case.

The *Consular Services Charter* sets out the standards of service all Australians can expect to receive from consular staff, including what they can and cannot do, and is available at smartraveller.gov.au.

Getting help

Overseas

You can contact the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre in Canberra from anywhere in the world. If you're in need of counselling, the centre can transfer you to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

Consular Emergency Centre +61 2 6261 3305

In Australia

In Australia, rape counselling services can provide assistance to victims of sexual assault. Trained and qualified staff will handle your call and provide you with useful information and support.

National
1800RESPECT 1800 737 732

Australian Capital Territory
Canberra Rape Crisis Centre 02 6247 2525

New South Wales
NSW Rape Crisis Centre 02 9819 6565 (Sydney)
1800 424 017 (outside Sydney)

Northern Territory
Crisis Line 1800 019 116
Sexual Assault Referral Centre 08 8922 7156 (Darwin)
08 8951 5880 (Alice Springs)

Queensland
Statewide Sexual Assault Helpline 1800 010 120

South Australia
Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service 1800 817 421

Tasmania
Sexual Assault Support Service 03 6231 1811 (southern)
03 6334 2740 (northern)
Centre Against Sexual Assault 03 6431 9711 (north-west)

Victoria
Centres Against Sexual Assault
Crisis Line 1800 806 292

Western Australia
Sexual Assault Resource Centre 1800 199 888

smartraveller.gov.au

Every traveller, every trip.

- 1. Register** your travel and contact details online at *smartraveller.gov.au* before you travel overseas—or at the local Australian embassy, high commission or consulate once you arrive—so we can contact you in an emergency.
- 2. Check the latest travel advice** for your destination at *smartraveller.gov.au* before you go. **Subscribe** to receive free email notification each time the advice is updated.
- 3. Take out comprehensive travel insurance** to cover hospital treatment, medical evacuation and any activities you plan to undertake in the countries you intend to visit.

While every care has been taken in preparing this brochure, neither the Australian Government nor its agents or employees, including any member of Australia's diplomatic and consular staff abroad, can accept liability for any injury, loss or damage arising in respect of any statement contained herein.

Consular Policy Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, RG Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
BARTON ACT 0221
Tel. (02) 6261 3305; 1300 555 135

Information for travellers and travel advisories are available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Smartraveller website *smartraveller.gov.au*.

October 2012

