

Prevention Pathways

Online Courses

FACT SHEET

Preventing Sexual Assaults

Even the best self-defense course cannot guarantee a woman's safety. A woman cannot completely prevent a sexual assault, but she can decrease the risk of sexual assault, by taking some safe steps. The most important thing a woman can do is to not allow alcohol or other drugs to reduce her ability to take care of herself and to make sensible decisions.

Think For Yourself

- Trust your feelings. If you feel in danger, you probably are.
- Be aware of your surroundings. If on foot, walk in well-lit areas; if driving, park your car in adequately lit areas as well.
- Yell "FIRE" if in danger; do not yell "HELP" or "RAPE." People are more likely to respond to a general emergency than one involving an assault.¹
- Hold a first date in a public place. Take your own car and always carry money for a taxi.
- Travel in groups whenever possible. Don't leave a party, concert, or game alone with someone you've just met or someone you do not know very well.

"PREVENT" Assault

To remember the ways to stay safe, think of the word PREVENT:

- **P**ut money in your wallet for an emergency or a ride home.
- **R**ecognize the early stages of a possible assault.
- **E**xamine carefully where you are.
- **V**erbalize your fight (struggle) loudly by shouting or talking loudly.
- **E**xhibit confidence if you are in danger.
- **N**ever assume sexual assault cannot happen to you.
- **T**ravel in groups whenever possible.²

Some men try to add what are known as "date rape drugs" to a woman's drink to make her unconscious. The three main date rape drugs are Rohypnol, GHB, and Ketamine. They are odorless and tasteless so that a woman does not necessarily know when one has been put in her drink. Women should never leave their drinks unattended at a party or a bar. They should also not allow others to get them drinks.

Sometimes people have a hard time clearly saying that they do not want to have sex. They may do or say something that means "no" without actually saying it, which can confuse the person asking for sex. Men and women can improve communication by understanding both the messages and the actions that mean "no."³

MESSAGES THAT MEAN "NO"	ACTIONS THAT MEAN "NO"
"I'm just not sure."	Looking down, turning away
"I'm not ready." "Please stop."	Crying
"I don't want to go all the way."	Moving away from you, avoiding you
"I'm confused, I don't feel like it."	Pushing your hand/body away
"I know we've done it before, but I don't want to now."	Changing the subject. Guarding her body (crossed arms) or getting up

What Men Can Do

Women can increase their own safety, but men can also help prevent sexual assaults to women by:^{4,5}

- Avoiding alcohol or drugs that cloud judgment and behavior.
- Accepting a woman's decision about sex—no matter what.
- Not assuming they know what a woman is thinking.
- Not having sex with a woman who is drunk. It could be rape.

- Never joking, believing, or supporting the idea that a woman “wanted it.”
- Not being drawn in at fraternities, bars, or parties to participate in a gang rape situation, and by stopping others from participating.

For more information, go to

www.samhsa.gov/preventionpathways and click on “courses” to find Module 7 of the online course, “It Won't Happen to Me: *Substance Abuse and Violence Against Women*.”

References

¹ Sexual Assault Crisis Center. (2001). Myths and facts about rape. Knoxville, TN: Author.

² Project SISTER. Sexual assault crisis and prevention services. (2001). Claremont, CA: Author. Retrieved from www.projectsister.org/ October 9, 2001.

³ Kieschnick, P., and Kennett, K. (1996). Dating violence prevention curriculum. Nantucket, MA: A Safe Place, Inc.

⁴ Association of American Colleges and Universities. (1997, April). Friends raping friends. Washington, DC: Author, Program on the Status and Education of Women.

⁵ Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. (2001). Rape awareness list for nice guys. Oklahoma City, OK: Author. Retrieved from www.ocadvsa.org/niceguys.html September 5, 2001.