

Sarah's Place

Sexual assault, domestic violence and non-fatal strangulation medical forensic care.

Everyone seeking care after an assault deserves support, autonomy and choice about what happens next. We serve patients of any race, age or gender who have experienced sexual assault, domestic violence or non-fatal strangulation.

A trained sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) at Sarah's Place can provide a medical exam up to 30 days post assault. Or, a medical exam with evidence collection up to five days post assault which includes:

Sexual assault forensic evidence kit: A complete or partial medical assessment with evidence collection in a manner that protects the victim's identity should the victim choose not to report the assault to law enforcement.

Strangulation kit: A medical exam with the option to have evidence collected.

Our primary focus is ensuring that you are safe, given necessary medical attention and that your questions and concerns are heard and valued.

We have the following comfort items available:

- Warm blanket.
- Weighted blanket.
- Support person.
- Music.
- Television.
- Advocate.
- Meals/snacks/drinks.
- On-call chaplain.
- Shower.
- Silly putty.
- Coloring books.

The following are options available to you during this exam. Your nurse will discuss these with you so that you can make an informed decision about select what you are comfortable with. You can withdraw your consent at any time, for any portion of the exam. You can also take breaks as often as you want. We care about you and want to support you throughout this process.

Interview

Medical screening exam: We ask how you're doing medically and if any physical symptoms are causing you concern. We will ask you if you felt like you couldn't breathe during the assault or if you are having any pain anywhere.

Medical history: We ask you about past medical problems or conditions, what medications you take and what allergies you have.

Assault history: We can ask you about what you can remember about what happened. This will help us know where you could have injuries or where evidence can be collected.

Physical Exam

Vital signs: We check these a few times during your exam to see how your body is doing.

Head-to-toe assessment: We can look to see if you have any injuries. You have control over what parts of your body you would like us to look at.

Genital assessment: We can look to see if you have any injuries. You have control over what areas we look at. If you have female anatomy, we can do a speculum exam. We can also collect swabs for DNA if your exam is within five days of the assault.

Photographs: We can photograph injuries using a method called forensic photography, meaning we take three photographs of each injury which are securely stored on forensic system.

Evidence collection: This is an option if your exam is within five days of the assault. The evidence that can be collected: clothing, swabs for DNA (mouth, skin, and genitals), hair (head and pubic), blood, and/or urine.

Medications

- Medications to prevent sexually transmitted infections like chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis and bacterial vaginosis.
- Emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy.
- Medications to prevent HIV infection (these can only be given if the exam is within three days of an assault).

Reporting to Law Enforcement

Your nurse will not report the assault to law enforcement unless you are under age 18 or over age 64, you are disabled or mentally ill, you have a serious physical injury or an injury from a deadly weapon, you are choosing to report, or if a minor was present. You have control over how involved you want to be in the investigation.

About Your Exam and Follow-up Care

Sexual assault exams at Sarah's Place are free and can include the following:

- Care and support from a trained, non-judgmental nurse.
- All medical care related to the assault (including care for injuries, X-rays, labs, etc.).
- Preventive medication for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and infections.
- Access to an advocate (a trained professional that can support you during your exam and walk you through your resources and options for when you leave the hospital).
- Control over whether or not you want to report to law enforcement. (If you are under the age of 18 or over the age of 64, disabled or mentally ill, have a serious physical injury, have an injury from a deadly weapon, or if a minor was present, then your nurse will have to report the assault to law enforcement, but you have the right to decide how involved you want to be in the investigation).
- Five counseling sessions with a mental health professional.
- Medical follow-up visit including testing for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) three to four weeks post assault exam.



Samaritan
Albany General
Hospital

Sarah's Place