

Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exams



MSU
Sexual Assault
Healthcare Program
Center for Survivors

MSU Sexual Assault Healthcare Program

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What are the benefits of a medical forensic exam?

- Medical care and treatment for any injuries
- Preventative medications to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and pregnancy
- Evidence preservation, allowing you time and space to decide if you want to report to law enforcement
- If you do choose to report, evidence collection may strengthen a case and increase the likelihood of prosecution

How should I prepare for a medical forensic exam?

- If you are able, try to avoid activities that may affect or disrupt potential evidence (such as bathing, eating, drinking, brushing your teeth, changing clothes, or doing laundry). However, you can still come in for an exam even if you have already done any of these things.
- Come in whenever you feel ready. You have up to 5 days (120 hours) after an assault, but coming in sooner can provide more options for evidence collection and preventative care.
- If possible, place any belongings—including the clothes you were wearing—into a paper bag to help preserve evidence.
- You are welcome to bring a trusted support person with you, such as a friend or loved one, if that feels helpful.

What is a Sexual Assault Kit?

A Sexual Assault Kit (SAK), sometimes referred to as a “rape kit,” includes any forensic evidence that may be collected during a medical-forensic exam. After the exam, you can choose whether to release the kit to law enforcement. If you do not release it right away, the kit will be securely stored for ten years at MSU SAHP or for at least one year at a hospital, while you consider your options.

What does it mean to release my kit?

- Releasing your kit means signing a form that allows it to be given to law enforcement, which may begin a criminal investigation. You would need to make a police report, and the kit would be sent to a forensic laboratory for testing.
- Once a kit is released to law enforcement, it cannot be returned to the medical facility. Releasing a kit may increase the likelihood of legal action being taken.
- If you choose to release your kit, you can track its status and location using the Track-Kit code provided to you at the time of your exam.

Do I have to report to the police?

No. Survivors are not required to report to law enforcement in order to receive a medical-forensic exam or have evidence collected.

At MSU SAHP, law enforcement will not be contacted unless you request it. In some cases, a hospital may notify police; however, you always have the right to decline to speak with them.

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