



## Rape Crisis Cape Town, South Africa

### **MEDICAL TREATMENT FOLLOWING RAPE**

When a woman has been raped, there are several things which can happen and against which steps can be taken. Not all of these things WILL happen if you are raped, but some or all of them can. You need to see a medical doctor or clinic sister as soon as possible after you have been raped so that you can discuss these things with her or him, and take the steps that you need to.

#### **Physical Injuries**

If you have been injured during the rape, you will need medical treatment for this. You may have cuts, bruising, abrasions, wounds or broken bones, and these should all be treated as soon as possible.

#### **Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's)**

Because rape is an act which involves sexual behaviour, there are several STD's which you might get. These include syphilis, VD and gonorrhoea. You need to discuss this with the medical person that you consult so that you can be given medicine to cure these diseases. This treatment should be obtained as soon as possible after the rape. But if, even some time later, you experience genital discharge, pain and discomfort, you should seek medical help.

#### **HIV / AIDS**

HIV is the virus which causes AIDS. There is no cure for AIDS, which is also a sexually transmitted disease because you can get it by having unprotected sex with someone who already has it. This means that, if the man who raped you has got it, there is a chance that you can get it. With other STD's, though they are unpleasant and even painful, they can be treated relatively easily even some time after the rape. With HIV it is different, because you MUST get treatment against HIV within 24 hours of being raped.

South Africa has a very high rate of HIV infection. South Africa also has a very high rate of rape. Women who have been raped need to know that they are at risk of getting HIV, and that there is a treatment which can help to reduce that risk.

The treatment is expensive and can make you feel very ill. It does not guarantee that you will not get HIV, but it reduces your chances significantly. You need to discuss this treatment (called AZT and 3TC) with the medical person that you consult AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER YOU HAVE BEEN RAPED. You must also remember that it has to be taken every day for 28 days or it will not help you.

AZT and 3TC is available in Cape Town on prescription. You must get the prescription from a doctor, clinic, or district surgeon. REMEMBER TO ASK THE PERSON WHO GIVES YOU THE PRESCRIPTION TO ALSO GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO TAKE AWAY THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE DRUGS. The following chemists have the drugs:

- Victoria Pharmacy, Woodstock.  
Telephone 447 2850. It costs R1 515.
- Glengariff Pharmacy, Sea Point.  
Telephone 434 8622. It costs R1 727.
- Webbs Pharmacy, Mowbray.  
Telephone 689 8923. It costs R1 024.

You can also go to Groote Schuur Hospital, where they will also make sure that you get all the other treatments that you need. Their telephone number is 404 4498.

#### **Pregnancy**

You can also get pregnant as the result of rape. If you ask the medical person that you speak with soon after the rape (within 72

hours), then you can get the "morning after" pill which will prevent pregnancy. If you do not, you can get an abortion (termination of pregnancy) up to 12 weeks later.

#### **Where Can You Get These Treatments?**

It is important to realise that, if you report the rape, you will be taken by the police to the nearest local Day Hospital. The job of the doctor that you will see there is to collect evidence in case there is a court case, NOT to treat you. She or he may treat you, but if they don't then you must visit your own doctor or a clinic as soon as possible for treatment.

If you do not report the rape, then you can still get all these treatments from your own doctor or from a clinic, or from Groote Schuur Hospital.

What is very important is to remember that you do not have a lot of time after being raped to get AZT and 3TC - get to a doctor or clinic for this as soon as possible. If necessary, tell them where they can get it. If they can't or won't get it for you, get it for yourself. Also remember to ask for something to take to help take away the effects of the drugs.

#### **Check list to take to the doctor, clinic or hospital:**

##### **Have I had medical treatment for:**

- **Physical injuries**
- **STD's (but not HIV)**
- **AZT and 3TCfor HIV**
- **The "morning after" pill**

**Do not be afraid to ask for these treatments - you have the right to protect yourself against what can happen to you because you were raped.**