

DATE RAPE

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As the parent of a freshman in college, this article is on a subject that is of concern to me. It is my hope that this article will open the eyes of young people and hopefully prevent someone from becoming a victim of date rape. If you have a female or a male child, grandchild or other loved one that is in high school or college, or will soon be attending college, please take the time to review the following information.

More than 80% of rape victims know their attackers. We teach our children from a young age to not talk to strangers. However the fact is you are more likely to be assaulted by someone you know, such as a friend, date, ex-boyfriend, classmate, neighbor, relative or employer.

Acquaintance rape is using physical force, emotional bargaining, blackmail or mind games to force you into sexual intercourse, fondling, kissing or other sexual contact that is unwanted.

One of the most common types of acquaintance rape is date rape. If you are a female between the ages of 16 - 24 you run the greatest risk of being raped by a date. The use of alcohol or drugs increases your risk. In one study, 74% of the men and 55% of the women had been drinking or using other drugs prior to the sexual assault.

Date rapes often occur as a result of misunderstood sex role behaviors and/or communication styles. Males who regard sex as "scoring" and are sexually aggressive often believe "no" can be changed to "yes" with a little more persuasion or force. Females frequently say "no" too softly or indirectly because they don't want to hurt feelings or jeopardize a relationship.

Prevention Tips for Women:

1. Say "NO" as if you mean no; if you don't mean no then don't say it.
2. Be clear, honest and consistent in your verbal communications about sexual desires.
3. Trust your instincts. If you have a bad feeling about a man, think carefully before dating him.
4. Be aware that nonverbal behaviors or actions may be interpreted differently than you intended. This does not mean it is your fault if you are assaulted.
5. Avoid excessive use of alcohol and/or other drugs.

Prevention Tips for Men:

1. Understand that forced sex is NEVER acceptable.
2. Accept "NO" as no.
3. Know the difference between desire and action. Being sexually aroused does not give you permission to force sex on someone.
4. Be responsible for your own sexual limits and actions; they are your responsibility.
5. Avoid excessive use of alcohol and/or other drugs.
6. Don't make assumptions. Just because your date welcomes some sexual contact doesn't mean she wants other types of sexual contact.

Reduce Your Risk of Date Rape Drugs:

1. Don't go to parties alone or to parties where you don't know anyone.
2. Always use the buddy system and never leave your friends behind.
3. Be aware of your surroundings. Monitor the behavior of friends who seem more intoxicated than the amount of alcohol would warrant.
4. The most common date rape drug is alcohol. If someone is encouraging you to drink a lot they may be trying to get you drunk enough to have sex.
5. Do not accept a drink from anyone you would not trust with your life. Any stranger or casual acquaintance could be suspect, even a person mixing or pouring drinks. If someone offers to buy you a drink, go with them to the bar and watch the bartender make your drink. Don't take open container drinks from anyone or drink anything out of a punch bowl.
6. Other date rape drugs include Rohypnol (roofies), GHB (liquid ecstasy) and Ketamine (special K).
7. Never leave a drink unattended. Do not give someone a chance to put drugs in your drink. Someone can put a date rape drug in your soda, beer or other drink. Take your drink with you wherever you go, even to the rest room. If you do leave your drink unattended, throw it out and make a new one.
8. If you are feeling sick or dizzy while out socially, go to someone you know and trust. If there is no person you can talk to call someone on the phone. Never leave alone. The intent of date rape drugs is to get you isolated and then to assault you.

9. Date rape drugs can cause you to lose all ability to make decisions or make it hard to remember what happened.

10. If you hear someone kidding about date rape drugs, pay attention. That should be a warning to leave the party or individual.

11. If you think you have been drugged call 911. A blood or urine sample can be collected to test for date rape drugs in your system. Date rape drugs can leave your system in 10 - 72 hours.

12. Alcohol greatly increases the effects of date rape drugs. The mixture can be deadly. Victims of date or acquaintance rape often have the following feelings and reactions: Confusion, denial, shock, fear, self-blame, embarrassment and helplessness.

If you are raped remember that no one asks for or deserves to be raped! You need to seek help either by calling 911 or by speaking to someone you trust. If you have been sexually assaulted you may call any of the following numbers, which are free, confidential and manned 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Hoosier Hills PACT 1-812-883-1959 or 1-888-883-1959. National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE.

For more tips on acquaintance rape go to www.wcstx.com. Research for this article was obtained with the assistance of the Women's Coalition of St. Croix.