

# Inova Ewing Forensic Assessment & Consultation Team (FACT) – FAQs

## **Q: Who should someone contact if they need help?**

A: If you are not safe, call 911 immediately. Individuals can also call RAINN (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network) 1-800-656-HOPE, 24/7. If you want information about evidence collection or to schedule a forensic exam, call 703-776-6666. If no one answers, please call 703-776-2199 and ask the operator to page the FACT nurse or child abuse physician on call.

## **Q: If someone has been sexually assaulted, what should they do to preserve evidence?**

A: Victims should avoid taking a shower, changing clothes, using the bathroom, eating, drinking or engaging in consensual sexual activities.

## **Q: When should I get a sexual assault exam?**

A: As soon as you can. Evidence and injuries are easier to document early, and some medications work only within a short time. We typically collect evidence for up to **five days** after an assault—and sometimes longer based on your situation—but earlier is better. **HIV-prevention medicine** works best when started right away and recommendations are to start **within 72 hours of the assault**. **Emergency contraception** and other preventive treatments also have to be given soon after assault for maximum effectiveness. If you think you were drugged, urine and/or blood tests should be taken **as soon as possible, ideally the first urination after the assault**, because some drugs leave the body quickly. You can choose what parts of care you want, including evidence collection, even if you're not ready to report to the police.

## **Q: How much does the exam cost?**

A: There is no cost for the forensic exam regardless of insurance. It is paid for by the state of Virginia.

## **Q: How long does an exam take?**

A: Every situation is different, but a typical exam takes two to three hours to complete. Our specially trained forensic nurse examiners provide sensitive, respectful care to avoid any additional trauma to the victim.

## **Q: Does the FACT department only do exams for women?**

A: The evidence collection process is available for anyone who has been the victim of a sexual assault. FACT department provides sensitive, responsive care to all victims, regardless of age, identified gender, sexual orientation, race or religion.

**Q: I don't want any evidence collected; I just want to get emergency contraception and get screened for sexually transmitted infections. Can the FACT department do this for me?**

A: If you are 100% sure you do not want evidence collected, you can go to your OBGYN, the local health department or your primary care physician for emergency contraception and STI screenings. Since other resources are available, we focus on those victims who also request evidence collection. Individuals always have the option of making an anonymous report and having evidence collected and stored for at least two years without notifying law enforcement.

**Q: I went to a party last night and when I woke up this morning, I couldn't remember what happened. Can an exam tell if I was assaulted or if I was drugged?**

A: In most cases, exams cannot conclusively tell whether someone had sexual intercourse. This is due to anatomy and other factors. The exam process will not show if DNA is present and FACT department does not test for DNA. The DNA evidence kit can only be tested by the crime lab if law enforcement is involved. Inova FACT department runs limited urine drug screens for certain categories of drugs. However, the state crime team can test for more precise "date rape" drugs and other substances in a person's system. Again, this testing is only available if the incident is reported to law enforcement.

**Q: What qualifications are required to become a forensic nurse examiner?**

A: Forensic nurse examiners have their bachelor's degree in nursing, a minimum two years of clinical experience – typically in an emergency department or trauma unit – and specialized sexual assault nurse examiner training.