

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.

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: How soon should someone receive a Sexual Assault Exam?

A: DNA can be quickly lost with normal daily activities. The sooner someone is able to reach out for help, the better chance of DNA being collected.

HIV preventive treatment must be started within 72 hours, but individuals can have a forensic exam for evaluation of injuries, collection of evidence and preventive treatment for bacterial sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy within 5 days of the assault.

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 2-3 hours to complete. Our specially trained Forensic Nurse Examiners provide sensitive, respectful care to avoid any additional trauma to the victim.

Q: Does that 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. The 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, 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 can'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 or not someone had sexual intercourse. This is due to the anatomy and other factors. The exam process will not show if DNA is present and the FACT department does not test for DNA. The DNA evidence kit can only be tested by the crime lab if law enforcement is involved.

The Inova FACT department runs limited urine drug screens for certain categories of drugs. However, the state crime 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: How can someone become a Forensic Nurse Examiner?

A: Forensic Nurse Examiners have their Bachelor of Science in Nursing, a minimum of two years clinical experience – typically in an emergency department or trauma unit – and specialized Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner training.