

Acquaintance Rape



Information for Parents and Caregivers

What is acquaintance rape?

Acquaintance rape is when somebody a teen knows—a boyfriend or girlfriend, a friend, a classmate, or even someone they just met—uses coercion (including drugs or alcohol), violence, or threats to force unwanted oral, vaginal, or anal sex. When this happens in a dating relationship, it is commonly known as “date rape.”

How common is acquaintance rape?

Unfortunately, acquaintance rape is very common. In some surveys, as many as one in four young women reported being verbally or physically pressured into having sex during the past year,¹ while one in 10 high school girls—and one in 20 boys—reported being forced into sex at some point in their lives.² More than one third of acquaintance rape victims are between the ages of 14 and 17.³

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How can I help protect my teen from acquaintance rape?

Although the blame for rape always lies with the rapist, there are some factors that can increase a teen’s risk of acquaintance rape. These include:^{1, 4-7}

- Frequently drinking to the point of being drunk or unable to resist sexual advances
- Using recreational drugs that impair judgment or make it difficult to resist sexual advances
- Outdated beliefs about sexual roles, such as thinking that someone who pays for a date has the right to expect sex
- Prior history of rape or sexual victimization

Books That Can Help

Haffner, D.W. (2008). *Beyond the big talk: Every parent's guide to raising sexually healthy teens, 2nd edition*. New York: Newmarket Press.

Murray, J. (2000). *But I love him: Protecting your teen daughter from controlling, abusive dating relationships*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Parents can help teens stay safe by giving them the information and support they need to make smart choices and avoid risky situations. Parents can give their teens reliable information about sexual intercourse (including ways to protect themselves from sexually transmitted disease and pregnancy), alcohol, drugs (including “date rape” drugs such as Rohypnol and GHB), and the qualities of healthy relationships.

Talking about these topics can be hard, but the more open and honest you are with your teen, the more likely it will be that he or she will turn to you with any questions and concerns. In fact, in a recent survey of American high school students, 9 out of

10 teens said it would be easier to delay sexual activity if they were able to have “more open, honest conversations” with their parents about sexual issues.⁸ For help in what to say and how to say it, try some of the additional resources listed in **Table 1**.



Table 1: Additional Resources for Keeping Teens Safe

General information on acquaintance rape and prevention

Advocates for Youth, Parents' Sex Ed Center

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents/index.htm>

Committee for Children

Preventing sexual harassment and date rape

<http://www.cfchildren.org/issues/abuse/preventdaterape>

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition

Date rape: What you need to know

<http://www.dvsac.org/resources/parents-date-rape.cfm>

National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network

*Preventing acquaintance rape:
A safety guide for teens*

http://nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/caring/preventingacquaintancerape.pdf

Information on date rape drugs

Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine

Date rape drugs: What parents should know

<http://www.ccjm.org/content/68/6/551.full.pdf>

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Tips for parents: The truth about club drugs

<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/ood/opca/outreach/clubdrugs/clubdrug.htm>

Parents. The Anti-Drug.

Rohypnol & GHB: How to avoid date rape drugs

http://www.theantidrug.com/DRUG_INFO/drug_info_ghb_rohypnol.asp

What should I do if my teen is a victim of acquaintance rape?

First and foremost, **stay calm**. Your teen may have exercised poor judgment and broken the rules by violating curfew, sneaking out of the house, drinking, or even using drugs, but rape is not a punishment for poor judgment. Even if your teen engaged in risky or inappropriate behavior, he or she did not ask for or deserve to be raped. It is understandable to feel angry and upset, but it is important to **aim your anger at the perpetrator and not at your teen**.

Get medical attention as soon as possible, even if your teen doesn't look hurt or doesn't want to see a doctor. Make sure that your teen does not change clothes, shower, or brush his or her teeth. The medical team and law enforcement may need to collect evidence from your teen's clothing and body.

Contact law enforcement to report the rape, and encourage your teen to share as much information as possible. Also, **seek counseling** for your teen. A counselor who specializes in sexual abuse can help you and your teen cope with what happened. Medical professionals and law enforcement officers can guide you in finding help. You can also contact your local mental health service agency, child advocacy center, or child trauma center. For additional info on where to seek help, see the additional resources in **Table 2**.



Aim your anger at the perpetrator and not at your teen.

Table 2: Help If Your Teen Has Been Raped

| General information on acquaintance rape and prevention | |
|---|---|
| Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition <i>How to help a friend or family member who's been raped</i> | http://www.dvsac.org/resources/help-family.cfm |
| National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network <i>What do I do now? A survival guide for victims of acquaintance rape</i> | http://nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/caring/acquaintancerapeguideforvictims.pdf |
| National Children's Alliance State-by-state listing of Children's Advocacy Centers, community-based facilities dedicating to providing support and care to victims of child abuse (including sexual abuse and rape) | http://www.nca-online.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=3999 |
| Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) <i>Help a loved one</i> | http://www.rainn.org/get-help/help-a-loved-one |
| Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration , Center for Substance Abuse Prevention <i>What to do if your child is raped or sexually assaulted</i> | http://pathwayscourses.samhsa.gov/vawc/vawc_8_pg3.htm |

References

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