

How can I preserve forensic evidence that might be present after a rape or sexual assault?

As the SARN is only available within office hours there might be a delay before you can access the process and a decision can be made about whether or not a medical examination will be undertaken. You may also want to take some time to think about whether or not to access the SARN.

In the meantime there are a number of things that you can do to try to preserve any forensic evidence that might be present. You may not feel able to do some or all of the things that are listed. Even if you are not able to take any of these measures or you have already washed, for example, there can still be forensic evidence present.

If possible, you should try not to:

Wash. If you do wash, try to wipe yourself with tissues first and keep these.

- Clean your teeth.
- Clean your fingernails.
- Change or wash any clothes you were wearing.
- Eat or drink anything.
- Take any alcohol or drugs.
- Go to the toilet. If you do go to the toilet, keep any tissues that you use and any sanitary protection.
- Change or wash your bedclothes if the assault took place there.

It can also help to keep any text messages from your attacker and to use your phone to take pictures of anything that could be useful to show what happened.

Remember, that if you are unable to do some or all of these things you can still access the SARN and get wider support from WRASAC.



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Sexual Assault Referral Network

 Information for women



If you have been raped or sexually assaulted you are not to blame. Please do not hesitate to contact us on Tel: 01382 205556 if you have any questions or would like to access SARN.

 **Women's Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre**
Dundee & Angus

 **NHS**
Tayside



SHANGHAI.COM

If you are 16 years old or over and have been raped or sexually

assaulted within the last 7 days you can access Dundee's Sexual Assault Referral Network (SARN). The SARN is a joint project between the Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre, Dundee and Angus (WRASAC) and NHS Tayside.

What is SARN

The SARN offers the opportunity for women to be referred for forensic medical examination following a rape and/or sexual assault who do not wish to report the incident to the police at that time. Having a forensic medical examination can mean that if you later (within 8 years) decided to make a report to Police Scotland that any valuable forensic evidence will have been stored.

How do I access the SARN?

The SARN is contacted through WRASAC between 9:30am-4:30pm Monday to Thursday and 9:30am- 1pm on a Friday - contact WRASAC on **(01382) 205556**. Someone will take your details and may need to call you back. If you get our answering machine please leave a name, safe contact number and let us know that you want to access the SARN. A Support Worker will get back to you as quickly as possible.

What will happen next?

A support worker from WRASAC will contact the Custody Nurse at West Bell Police Station. Your name and date of birth, as well as brief details about what you have experienced, will have to be given to the Custody Nurse at this stage. You do not have to make a formal complaint to the police at this time and they will not be made aware that a request has been made to access the SARN.

The Forensic Physician will decide if a medical examination is necessary. If an examination is required a suitable time will be arranged for this to take place. A support worker from WRASAC will accompany you to the Police station for this to happen. A SOLO (Sexual Offences Liaison Officer) will be notified and will be given the forensic samples for storage after the examination. You will not have any contact with the SOLO Officer. They will not be provided with your personal details. Forensic samples are stored against a unique identifying number which is allocated by WRASAC.

What does a medical examination involve?

Depending on the nature of the assault and a range of other factors every medical examination will be different. However, there are some common features of medical examinations that you can expect:

- A medical history will be taken;
- You will be asked to provide details about the nature of the assault ;
- Depending on the information that you have provided a range of swabs and collection of other physical evidence will take place; and
- You will be provided with information about sexual health screening and services.

You should expect the examination to last a minimum of one hour. A Forensic Physician will carry out the examination. A Nurse will also be present and you can also chose for a WRASAC Support Worker to be present if you wish.

What are the benefits of using SARN?

Many women are unsure about making a formal complaint to the police after they have been raped or sexually assaulted. You may be feeling scared, upset, to blame: this is a normal response to experiencing a traumatic experience.

Any forensic evidence gathered at this time can be stored for up to 8 years and at any point in that period you can make a formal complaint to the police. Forensic evidence can be important in contributing to the legal case against the accused.

WRASAC will store, in line with Data Protection legislation, your contact details and record of your contact with the SARN so that at anytime you wish to make a formal complaint to the police then this information can be accessed.

If you use the SARN you will be asked to provide feedback regarding the process afterwards. You do

not have to provide feedback if you do not want to. If you do provide feedback this will be arranged for a time that you feel comfortable with. The feedback you provide will help us to improve the SARN process for people who use it in the future.

If you use the SARN you will also be offered a range of other services that WRASAC provide to women who have been raped or sexually assaulted. You do not have to use these services if you do not want to.

