

Sexual Assault: The Impact on Health

Facts to Consider

- Sexual assault can have profound effects on women's health and well-being. It can result in physical injuries as well as psychological and emotional trauma.
- Statistics Canada indicates that women are physically injured in 11% of sexual assaults. [\[1\]](#)
- Women who have a history of being abused are at high risk for developing lifetime mental health problems. [\[2\]](#)
- The effects of sexual assault of woman's mental health and well-being can be just as serious as physical injuries. Nine out of ten incidents of violence against women have an emotional effect on the victim. The most commonly reported effects are anger, fear and becoming more cautious and less trusting. [\[3\]](#)
- The emotional and psychological effects of sexual assault can also include:
 - depression
 - confusion
 - sleep disturbances, including nightmares
 - erratic mood swings
 - eating disorders
 - anxiety
 - flashbacks
- Assaults on women with disabilities can trigger severe physical reactions. A woman with epilepsy may have a seizure, a woman with cerebral palsy may develop even more unclear speech, or a woman with diabetes may go into insulin shock. [\[4\]](#)
- A Toronto study shows that 83% of female psychiatric in-patients reported a history of physical or sexual abuse. [\[5\]](#)
- It is estimated that an average of 63% of women seeking assistance with violence issues also have a substance abuse problem. [\[6\]](#)
- Sexual abuse by physicians is a significant problem -- one study found that 8% of Ontario women age 25 - 44 have been sexually harassed or abused by their physician. [\[7\]](#)

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Ticoll, M (1994). Violence and People with Disabilities. A Review of the Literature. Ottawa: L'Institut Roehner Institute and Health Canada.

REFERENCES

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4. DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) (1989). Violence Against Women With Disabilities. Toronto: DAWN Canada.
5. Firsten, T. (NO DATE). An Exploration of the Role of Physical and Sexual Abuse for Psychiatrically Institutionalized Women. Toronto: Ontario Women's Directorate.
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7. Health and Welfare Canda. (1991). Canada Health Monitor Survey. Ottawa: Author.