



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



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Consular Directorate

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RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT OVERSEAS



FCO TRAVEL ADVICE

know before you go

[fco.gov.uk/travel](https://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)

www.fco.gov.uk/travel



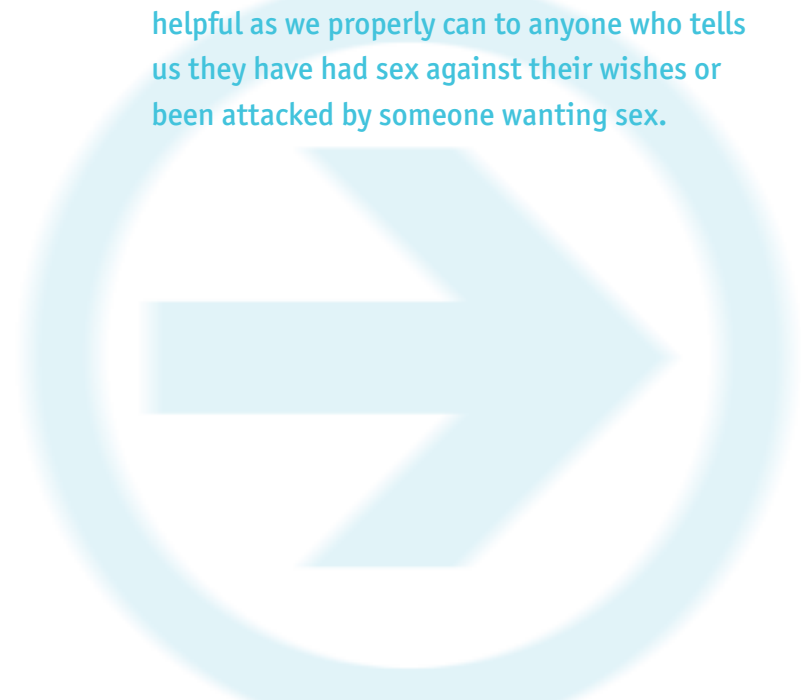
www.fco.gov.uk/travel





ADVICE FOR BRITISH NATIONALS ON PERSONAL SAFETY AND INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS

Rape and sexual assault can happen to women and men of all ages and backgrounds. Many people who have been raped or sexually assaulted know their attacker. However, some do not. While most visits abroad are trouble-free, we are becoming more aware of people being raped while they are overseas. Rape is a very traumatic experience whenever and wherever it happens, but the trauma can often be made even more difficult to deal with when the rape happens abroad. We aim to be as helpful as we properly can to anyone who tells us they have had sex against their wishes or been attacked by someone wanting sex.



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STAYING IN CONTROL

- Check the travel information the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) publishes for the country you are travelling to either on-line at www.fco.gov.uk/travel, or by phoning 0845 850 2829. The world is an unpredictable place and you need to know about risks to your personal safety and security, and what areas to avoid. We update our travel website regularly (see note 1 below).
- Think about what you are doing at all times and trust your instincts. It is easy to let your guard slip when you are on holiday. Try to be as careful as you would be at home.
- Try to avoid potentially risky situations. When going to a pub, club or party, try to avoid going alone. Friends can watch out for each other.
- Act confidently. Plan your itinerary so you know where you are going and what you are doing. Try to avoid looking lost or confused.
- Be aware of other holidaymakers and new friends you have made. People are often raped or sexually assaulted by someone they know, even if they don't know them very well. Don't tell strangers where you are staying or give out too many details about your travel plans.

- Keep the phone number of the nearest British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate and a trustworthy taxi or minicab company with you at all times. (Hotels and tour companies may be able to recommend one.) Consider taking your mobile phone with you or renting one at your destination. Programme in these useful numbers. If you are going to take your mobile phone with you, contact your UK mobile network provider to make sure that your existing handset will work in the country you are travelling to.
- Always keep some money for phone calls and a taxi journey home from your destination separate from the spending money you take out with you.

HOTELS AND GUESTHOUSES

- Never leave your key where someone can note your room number.
- Do not leave your window open, especially if your room is on the ground floor or has a balcony.
- Consider locking your room door even when you are inside the room and using a door wedge for extra security.
- Never open your room door to anyone without checking with reception first that they are genuine.

Note 1:

While we take particular care in preparing our travel information, that information is general and may change. Neither the UK Government nor any government official can accept liability for injury, loss or damage arising from any statement contained in it

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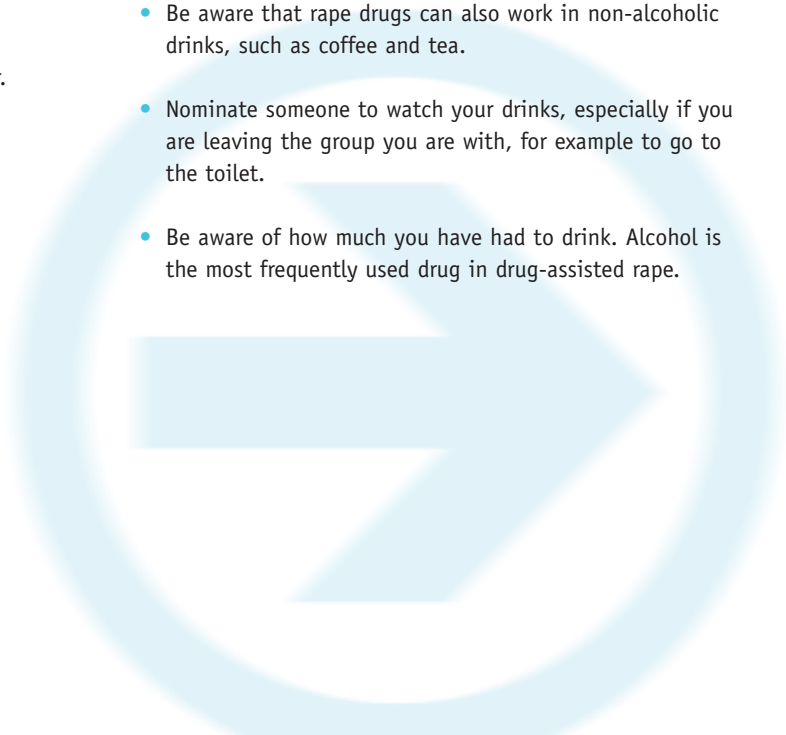


GOING OUT

- Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Make sure you know the address and phone number of where you are staying and how to get back.
- Stay aware of what is going on around you and keep away from situations where you do not feel comfortable.
- Be aware that alcohol and drugs can lead to you being less alert, less in control and less aware of your environment. If you are going to drink alcohol, know your limit. Remember that drinks served in bars overseas are often stronger than those in the UK.
- If you are out as part of a group, look out for one another. This will help you feel, and be, more confident and safe.
- Be cautious of people who ignore your personal space, do not listen to you, make you feel guilty if you resist their advances, or appear to be very drunk.
- Consider very carefully whether you should leave the pub, club or party with someone you have just met.

DRINKS

- Be aware that drugs are sometimes used in rape. They are normally colourless and tasteless, and can make you virtually unconscious and defenceless. Once someone has added drugs to your drink, you will not normally be able to detect them.
- Never accept drinks from strangers or from anyone you do not completely trust.
- Do not share or exchange drinks.
- Try to keep your drink with you at all times.
- Be aware that rape drugs can also work in non-alcoholic drinks, such as coffee and tea.
- Nominate someone to watch your drinks, especially if you are leaving the group you are with, for example to go to the toilet.
- Be aware of how much you have had to drink. Alcohol is the most frequently used drug in drug-assisted rape.



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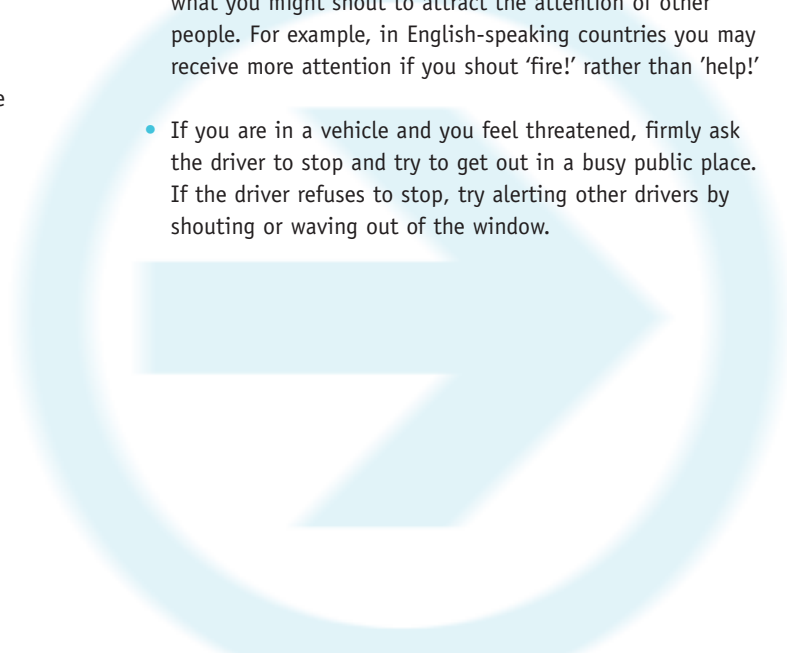


USING A TAXI OR MINICAB

- Never accept a lift from an unlicensed taxi, a stranger or someone you do not completely trust.
- Try to share a cab with a friend.
- Always take registered taxis that are licensed by the police or local authority and have identity numbers. Hotels are normally willing to call you a cab or may be able to provide details of a trustworthy taxi or minicab company.
- Do not flag down a minicab on the street. Always carry the phone number of a taxi or minicab company and book a cab over the phone.
- When you phone, ask for the driver's name and the make and colour of the car.
- Give the operator a name (it doesn't have to be your real name), and when the cab arrives ask the driver their name and company, and ask the name of the person they are expecting to collect.
- If you're calling a taxi from a public place, try not to let people overhear your name or details of where you are staying.
- Always sit in the back of the car, and if you chat to the driver do not give them any personal details.

IF YOU FEEL THREATENED

- Stay calm, and try to be firm and direct.
- Remember that you always have the right to say 'no' at any point. Never feel that you have to go further than you feel comfortable with.
- If you feel pressured, get out of the situation. Don't assume that it won't happen to you.
- Get away from the person you are with and go to a safe place.
- If you feel uncomfortable or in danger, do not be afraid to draw attention to yourself. Shout, make a fuss and make people aware that you feel threatened. Consider beforehand what you might shout to attract the attention of other people. For example, in English-speaking countries you may receive more attention if you shout 'fire!' rather than 'help!'
- If you are in a vehicle and you feel threatened, firmly ask the driver to stop and try to get out in a busy public place. If the driver refuses to stop, try alerting other drivers by shouting or waving out of the window.



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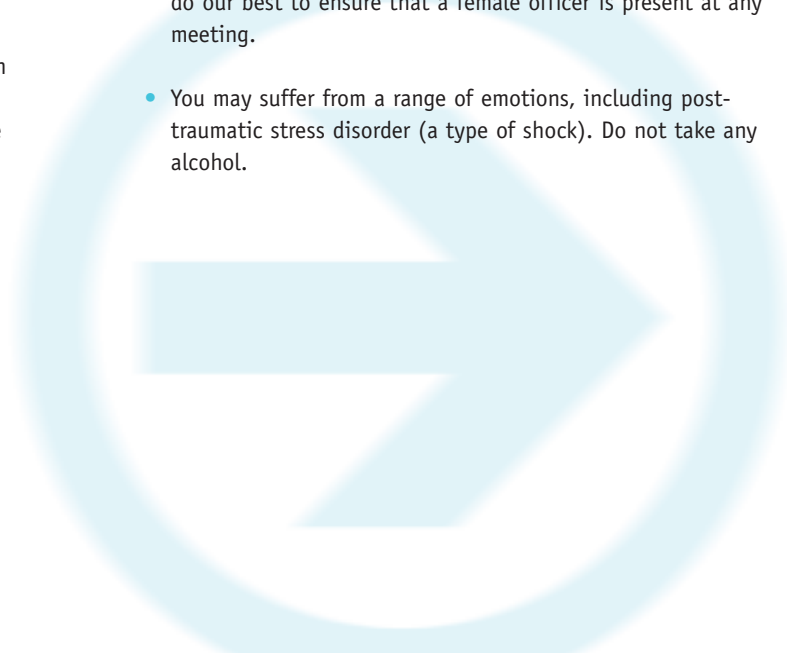


IF YOU THINK YOU'VE BEEN DRUGGED

- Trust your instincts – they are there to warn you of danger. You may feel strange, sick or drunk after only a couple of drinks, or even if you have not drunk alcohol, someone could have put a drug in your soft drink.
- Tell a friend. They should take you to a safe place, such as your hotel room. Ask your friend to stay with you until the effects of the drug have fully worn off – probably the following morning. Be very sure that you fully trust the friend you are asking to help you, no matter how long you have known them.
- Consider getting medical attention. Drugs can affect people in different ways, and may react badly with any medication you are taking.
- If you are alone, or with a stranger, get help from the police, a hospital or the British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate. If you want to contact us outside working hours, most of our offices operate an answerphone service giving an emergency number. It is important to get to a safe place. If possible, ask someone to contact a trusted friend.
- You must never let a stranger take you anywhere.
- Try to avoid giving out your personal details, including where you are staying or your room number.

IF YOU THINK YOU'VE BEEN RAPED

- You may have been raped if you wake up in a strange place with memory loss, scattered or torn clothing, bruises or scratches on your body, or a sore genital area.
- Do not keep the attack to yourself. It can be very important that you talk to someone straight away. If possible, talk to a friend or relative, and contact the nearest British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate.
- We will try to give you help. We understand that you may find it painful or embarrassing to talk about what happened, and we aim to be polite, patient, sensitive and non-judgemental. In most cases of rape and sexual assault, the victims, regardless of their sex, prefer to talk about their ordeal with women. If that is what you want, we will do our best to ensure that a female officer is present at any meeting.
- You may suffer from a range of emotions, including post-traumatic stress disorder (a type of shock). Do not take any alcohol.



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- Consider reporting the crime to the local police. We can tell you about local police and legal procedures. If you choose to report the incident to the police, ask a friend or relative to go to the police with you – many people find it helps not to be alone. If you want, we may be able to come with you. Where possible we can try to make sure that you are interviewed by a female police officer if that is what you would prefer. We can also provide details of local lawyers and interpreters (see note 2 below). However, only you can decide if you want to take legal action: we cannot make the decision for you. Whatever you choose, we will support your wishes.
- Remember that if you choose not to report the crime to the local police soon after the incident but change your mind later, forensic evidence may be lost – particularly if you have washed or changed your clothes. Also in some countries, you must report the crime before returning to the UK if you want it to be investigated.
- We can help you deal with the local authorities in arranging a medical examination, where possible with a female doctor if you prefer. Depending on local conditions and laws, we can also arrange for you to see a doctor who can give advice on sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS and on pregnancy or abortion. Even if you do not want to report the crime to the police, you may want to be examined by a doctor. We can provide a list of local hospitals and English-speaking doctors.
- Check what your insurance policy covers **before you travel**. If you need medical treatment, you may need to provide details of your travel insurance policy. You may also be covered by your travel insurance for any personal injuries you receive as a result of a crime, and any belongings you may have lost at the time of the assault. You will probably have to report the incident to the police in the country that you are in for the insurance to be valid.
- If you want us to, we can contact your next of kin or other family and friends.

Note 2:

Neither the Government nor the relevant British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate can make any guarantee in relation to the professional ability or character of any person or company on the list, nor can they be held responsible in any way for you relying on any advice you are given.

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RETURNING HOME

- A sexual assault may change the way you feel for a long time. Different people react to the trauma of sexual assault in different ways. You might feel angry, ashamed, frightened or guilty. You may have different feelings at different times. You may have some of these feelings soon after the attack and some may develop later on, even years later. This is normal after such a trauma and you should consider getting help and advice whenever you feel you need it, no matter how long after the attack it may be.
- However you are feeling, you are unlikely to be alone. You may want to get help from a counsellor or support group. We can provide you with information on what professional help is available locally and in the UK for you and for your family.
- If your case goes to trial abroad at a later date, we may be able to assist in certain ways, for example by keeping you up to date with any developments in the case. However, sometimes this can be difficult because in some countries consular officers are not recognised as interested parties, and so judicial authorities will refuse to give them information. In these cases you should consider appointing a local lawyer who can look after your interests in court and follow any trial for you. Be aware that we cannot investigate the crime, provide legal advice ourselves or pay for your lawyers.
- Courts overseas may be able to order the offender to pay compensation for your injuries or losses, either after they have been convicted in a criminal court or as a result of civil action. Some countries have a state-funded compensation scheme to cover physical or psychological injuries suffered as a result of a violent crime, which may apply to foreign nationals as well. You will normally need a police report.
- One of the distressing things about sexual assault is that, if you are a woman, it may result in pregnancy. If your period is late, you should consider having a pregnancy test. Stress, tension and worry can also sometimes cause you to have a late period but it is probably best to get medical help anyway.
- For both men and women, the possibility of sexually transmitted infections is a very real risk. If you are examined by a doctor, they should be able to give you the appropriate advice, but when you return home you may also want to consult your own GP.
- Even if you did not report the attack while you were overseas, you may want to report the crime to the police when you return to the UK. Your local police force should be able to tell you what action they may be able to take and what options may be available to you. They will also be aware of local support organisations. If you wish, we can consult our London-based Police Advisor, who can consider requesting the services of a Sexual Offences Trained Officer from your local police station to advise and assist you on your return. However you must understand that the British police will not be able to investigate the attack abroad.

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USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

Project Sapphire – 020 7321 7359

Project Sapphire is a Metropolitan Police scheme aimed at improving rape investigation and victim care. Project Sapphire can put you in touch with local police and support services wherever you live in the UK.

www.met.police.uk/sapphire

Rape Crisis Co-ordination Group

The Rape Crisis Co-ordination Group (RCCG) has details of local rape crisis groups that offer advice, support and counselling to female victims of rape and sexual assault. They can also direct women to local rape crisis services in other countries.

www.rapecrisis.co.uk

Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre – 08451 221 331

Will provide support and counselling for women and girls, but can refer male victims to other organisations.

www.resasc.org.uk

The Survivors Trust – 01788 550554

An umbrella group which provides a link to over 70 member organisations working with victims of sexual crime, including child abuse.

www.thesurvivorstrust.org.uk

Roofie Foundation – 0800 783 2980

Provides support by telephone for people affected by drug-related rape and sexual abuse.

www.roofie.com

FPA – 0845 310 1334

FPA (Family Planning Association) provides advice and details of local sexual health clinics in the UK. Their helpline is open from 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (closed Thursday 3pm to 4.30pm).

www.fpa.org.uk

Rape Crisis Scotland – 0141 248 8848

Does not provide direct support but can refer victims to a relevant local service.

Terrence Higgins Trust – 0845 1221 200

The Terrence Higgins Trust helpline is open every day from 10am to 10pm, Monday to Friday and 12 noon to 6pm, Saturday to Sunday and provides information and counselling for people who know or fear they might have a sexually transmitted infection, particularly HIV or AIDS.

www.tht.org.uk

Survivors UK – 0845 122 1201

Survivors UK supports and provides resources for men who have experienced any form of sexual violence. Their national helpline for men and their families, partners and friends is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7pm to 10pm.

www.survivorsuk.org

Refuge – 0808 2000 247

Refuge has a 24-hour helpline that offers support and practical help to women experiencing domestic violence, including rape and sexual assault.

www.refuge.org

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Relate – 0845 130 40 10

Relate offers a relationship counselling service, and provides a counselling service for victims of rape and sexual assault and their partners, particularly where trauma leads to relationship difficulties. Their helpline is open from 9.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

www.relate.org.uk

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust – 020 7091 0014

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust offers advice on personal safety and tips on how to avoid being the victim of aggression. The Trust publishes a 'Worldwise' handbook and video on safer travel abroad, and has a 'Worldwise' website from which you can download specific 'safety' guidance on countries throughout the world.

www.suzylamplugh.org

Samaritans – 08457 909090

Samaritans has a 24-hour helpline that offers confidential emotional support for people who are suicidal or distressed.

www.samaritans.org.uk

Victim Support – 0845 3030 900

Victim Support provides information and confidential support to victims of rape and sexual assault, and can refer victims to other support networks and local agencies if necessary. Their national helpline is open from 9am to 9pm, Monday to Friday, 9am to 7pm at weekends and from 9am to 5pm bank holidays.

www.victimsupport.com

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

We aim to make sure our help is accessible and equal to everyone, no matter what their sex, race, age, colour, religion, sexuality or disability. We welcome your views on the support we provide. They will help us to identify what we do well and what we could do better. If you have any comments, please write to:

FEEDBACK

Policy, Communications and Training Group
Consular Directorate
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Old Admiralty Building
Spring Gardens
London
SW1A 2PA
Phone: 020 7008 1500

Fax: 020 7008 0152

E-mail: feedback.consular.services@fco.gov.uk

If you are not satisfied and want to make an official complaint, please write to the FCO Director of Consular services at the same address or email

complaint.consular.services@fco.gov.uk

We will investigate your complaint fully and do our best to give you a full reply within 20 working days. If we cannot give you a full reply within this time, we will tell you when we expect to do so. We will record and examine complaints, and use the information to help make sure we offer the best possible help and support.

