

Assault

What Is It?

Assault is a physical attack or a threat that causes fear of an attack. Victims of assault may be attacked by one or more people. An assault may include one or more types of harm, such as pushing, shoving, slapping, punching, or kicking. It may also include the use of weapons like knives, sticks, bottles, or bats. Common injuries from an assault include bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches, and broken bones. Victims may even be killed during an assault. Even if the attack results in no physical injury to the victim, it still can be considered an assault.

There are many laws used to classify different kinds of assault. The classification can be based on injury, weapons used, or other circumstances of the crime. Any assault victim, though, injured or not, may experience emotional reactions to the crime.

Assault can happen to anyone. Most teen victims of assault report that they know who attacked them, and often the attacker is a family member, friend, or someone the victim knows from school or the neighborhood. If someone assaults you, it is important to tell an adult you trust and to contact the police.

If you are a victim of assault, you might:

- Be shocked, angry, or afraid.
- Feel helpless because you could not prevent the assault.
- Have nightmares or flashbacks about the assault.
- Want to hurt the attacker(s).
- Think that you did something to cause the attack.
- Feel embarrassed about telling your family and friends.
- Feel any or all of the above, whether you were physically injured or not.

You're Not Alone

- Assault is the most common violent crime in the United States.¹
- In 2005, more than 1.2 million teens were victims of assault.²
- In 2005, slightly more males than females were victims of simple assault.³

Get Help

Being assaulted is not your fault. It is important to remember that assault is a crime, and as an assault victim, you do not have to deal with this alone. There are people in your community who can help you.

To find someone who can help you, call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255) or a crisis hotline in your area. You might also talk to a trusted family member, a friend's parent, an adult neighbor or friend, an older sibling or cousin, or other person you trust.

- Consider calling the police.
- Some adults, such as teachers, counselors, and social workers, are required to talk to another authority about abuse of children and teens. You always have the right to ask whom your information will be shared with before you tell someone what happened.

Help Yourself

- If you sense that you may not be safe, try to get to a safer place or to safer people.
- Try to stay in areas where there are other people around.
- If you are attacked and need medical treatment, call 911 and let your parent or another adult know as soon as possible.
- If you are attacked and you do not know the attacker, try to remember what the person looked like. It will be useful when you call the police.

Help Someone Else

If you see or know someone who has been assaulted, you can:

- Call the police.
- Get a parent, teacher, or other adult to come help.
- Talk to the person who was assaulted. Tell them you want to help them, and encourage them to talk to a supportive adult.

If You Want to Read More...

- about assault, or
- about assaults related to your race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability (hate crimes)

...see our GET HELP series at www.ncvc.org/gethelp.

1 Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2005: Statistical Tables*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006), Table 3.

2 Ibid, Table 1.

3 Ibid., Table 3.