

What is Assault?

Basic Legal Information for Women Experiencing Violence

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He hurt you.
That's **against the law**.
It's a crime called assault.

It doesn't matter if it is your husband, partner, boyfriend or relative. Your partner or family member is not allowed to hurt you.

It's against the law for anyone to hit, kick, slap, punch, shove or otherwise physically hurt you. This is a crime called **assault**.

It's against the law for him to have sex with you, or touch, kiss or grab you, when you have said no or never said yes. This crime is called **sexual assault**.

It is against the law for anyone to hurt you. These laws are the same for everyone in Canada, even if you are new to this country.

Q. WHAT CAN I DO?

A. You have options.

You Can. . . Go to a Safe Place

You can go to a **women's shelter**. These are safe places for women escaping abusive partners. They will give you and your children a place to sleep and food. They can give you information about the police, the law, housing and other services.

You don't have to stay at the shelter. You also can just call for information, such as how to get counseling.

Click here to find [a shelter in your area](#). Some shelters will even help with transportation arrangements.

You can go to a friend's or relative's house. Keep in mind, your abuser may follow you there. Think about what you will do if he shows up.

You Can. . . Call the Police

The police may come because you or someone else calls them.

If they think an assault has happened, they are supposed to lay a charge whether or not you want them to.

No Contact Orders

These are orders from the courts that tell your abuser he can't call or visit you or other people close to you, like your children or parents. The workers at women's shelters can help you get a "restraining order" or "peace bond".

Read more about [No Contact Orders](#).

Q. WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF I CALL THE POLICE?

A. Sometimes the police charge both the woman and the man if they think both people have broken the law.

This can be a serious problem for women who are trying to protect themselves or their children. When there are kids in the home and both parents are arrested, they may be taken by the Children's Aid Society. If this happens to you, call a women's shelter or women's centre as soon as you can for help.

Sometimes the police ask you if you want him charged. This is a very hard decision for you to make. You may want to ask for some time to think about it or you may want to talk to someone, like a friend or a counselor at a women's organization, before deciding.

If the police DO charge your abuser, you might have to go to court as a witness of the crime of your assault. Not all charges mean you will be in court. **You** are not taking the abuser to court, rather, the **State** is charging the abuser for breaking the law.

The court date will be some time after the assault. While you wait for the trial, you may want to speak with a counsellor. Going to court can be hard. You may want to bring a support person with you.

"My ex had been mean and threatening since the baby was born. Then one night he beat me up. I was so scared - I just grabbed the baby and ran. We ended up at a women's shelter in a nearby town. I felt like my life was over. But they listened to my story and helped me figure out what to do next."

WRITE DOWN WHAT HAS HAPPENED

Right now you may not want to call the police or leave your partner. You may feel scared and confused. **This is normal.**

Until you decide what to do, it is a good idea to record what has happened. This may help you understand things better. If you choose to contact the police or a lawyer at another time, this record will help them understand what you have been going through.

- Go to a women's shelter or sexual assault centre and ask them to record your story and injuries. You do not have to stay if you do not want to.
- Visit a sexual assault/domestic violence care and treatment centre and see their doctor. Ask her/him to record any injuries.
- Get someone you trust to take pictures of the marks your partner or relative has made on your body.
- Write down what happened and the date.
- Keep in mind: not all records will be allowed in court.

- Keep in mind: the medical records of an assault can be kept and NOT have the police involved. If you want to involve the police later, these records will be on file for you.

Keep your record in a safe place where your abuser will not find it.

OTHER RESOURCES:

To find a women's organization in your community, visit our listing of [Crisis Centres](#) or call the [Assaulted Women's Helpline](#) at 1-866-863-0511 or TTY 1-866-863-7868. The Helpline provides support in a variety of languages.

More information about violence against women on this website:

- For immigrant, refugee and non-status women: [What is Woman Abuse?](#) and [Basic Immigration Issues Related to Woman Abuse](#)
- Questions and answers about [Restraining Orders, Peace Bonds and Terms of Release](#)
- [Articles, resources and government policy](#) regarding woman abuse

"What is Assault?" is available in flyer form in English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Farsi, Punjabi, Russian and Tamil. Please contact us at justice@metrac.org to have free copies mailed to you.