



**Barwon CASA  
Counselling  
Services**

## **What is A Forensic Medical Examination? 2014**

**A forensic medical examination (FME) is conducted by a forensic medical officer or a forensic nurse examiner for the purpose of collecting and documenting forensic specimens to be used in the court process following a recent rape or sexual assault. Forensic medical examinations are conducted in the Crisis Care Unit (CCU) of a Hospital or a Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA)**

### **When Would I Have a Forensic Medical Examination?**

People who have been raped or sexually assaulted within the past 72 hours can elect to have a forensic medical examination. A prompt forensic medical examination enhances the collection of viable DNA specimens. DNA specimens commence to deteriorate from the moment of deposit and may no longer be considered viable after 72 hours.

### **What is a Forensic Medical Examiner or Forensic Nurse Examiner?**

A forensic medical officer or forensic nurse examiner is a doctor or nurse who has undertaken specialist training provided by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine to qualify to conduct forensic medical examinations, collect and record forensic specimens and samples, prepare a report and be examined in the court.

### **I Don't Know If I Want to Have a Forensic Medical Examination:**

People often don't know if they want to have a forensic medical examination following a rape or sexual assault. The CASA counsellor will support you and provide you with information to assist you to make the best decisions for yourself at that point in time. The police Sexual Offences & Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) will also support you and answer questions you may have. You will be able to meet and talk to the forensic medical officer and to ask questions without having to proceed with a forensic medical examination. You will be treated with respect and dignity while you consider your options and make decisions.

### **Can I Use the Toilet, Have a Shower, Brush My Teeth, Change and Wash My Clothes?**

You may not have decided if you want to have a forensic medical examination to have DNA specimens collected. It would be in your best interests to delay using the toilet, having a shower, brushing your teeth, changing or washing your clothes until you make your decision as forensic evidence may be lost or compromised otherwise. Do use the toilet, if not to would make you very uncomfortable.

### **What Does a Forensic Medical Examination Involve?**

The forensic medical officer will explain the purpose and the procedure of a forensic medical examination to you. Your consent will be obtained prior to the commencement of the examination. You will be treated with respect and dignity through the process. You will be able to ask questions at any time. You can ask for the forensic medical examination to be stopped at any time or to have a break. The forensic medical officer will record your answers to questions you will be asked and comments you make regarding the rape or sexual assault. The forensic medical officer will take a full medical history and conduct a full or partial physical examination. The forensic medical officer will provide emergency contraception, pain relief, Hep B vaccination and information regarding STI testing and treatment.

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Sexual Assault Crisis Line 24x7: 1800 806 292

### **Is a Forensic Medical Examination Private and Confidential?**

A forensic medical examination is conducted with the same respect for your privacy as a medical examination conducted by your own general practitioner (GP). You may have another person present with you, including a CASA counsellor, a family member or a friend. A forensic medical examination cannot be considered confidential as it is conducted for the purpose of presenting forensic evidence of rape or sexual assault in court proceedings.

### **What Forensic Evidence will be Collected and Recorded?**

The forensic medical officer will collect and record DNA specimens and you may be asked to surrender some or all items of clothing and footwear. The forensic medical officer will measure and record a description of injuries and may collect hair samples, foreign materials and blood and urine samples. In some circumstances forensic photography may be used to record injuries.

### **What Happens to Forensic Specimens, Clothing and Footwear Collected?**

Forensic specimens, other than toxicology samples will be handed to the SOCIT officer to forward to Victorian Police Forensic Science Centre forensic testing. Items of clothing and footwear will be returned on conclusion of the court process, however clothing and footwear may be treated with chemicals that cause straining or have sections cut out and may not be wearable.

### **What Will I Wear Home if My Clothes and Footwear Are Collected?**

The CASA counsellor will provide a full set of new clothes, comprising underwear, track pants, tee shirt, top and footwear, in your size for you to wear home. The CASA counsellor will provide a private ensuite where you can shower and change clothes before you leave the CCU, if you would like to. Your family or friends may collect a change of clothes and footwear from your home and bring them into the CCU for you to wear home.

### **Can I Have a Forensic Medical Examination and Decide Not To Go To Court?**

You may decide that you do not want to go to court or to have SOCIT continue to investigate your complaint after you have had a forensic medical examination. SOCIT will authorise any forensic evidence collected to be destroyed. You may request SOCIT to reactivate your complaint in the future; however you will not have forensic evidence to support your complaint in court.

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