



# UNDERSTANDING PERK EXAMS AND YOUR OPTIONS AFTER A SEXUAL ASSAULT

## **Your safety and health are most important.**

Please consider seeing a healthcare provider even if you don't want to report to police right now. The healthcare provider can check for injuries and talk with you about possible pregnancy concerns and/or sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. If you think you may want to report the assault, the healthcare provider can collect evidence of the assault from your body. This is called a PERK (physical evidence recovery kit) exam.

## **Where can I get support and information?**

Community-based Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies provide free crisis intervention and counseling services to people who have been sexually assaulted. They also have specially trained confidential advocates to come to the hospital and/or the police station to help you. To find help in your community, contact the Statewide Hotline at 1.800.838.8238 or text 804.793.9999.

## **What is a PERK (Physical Evidence Recovery Kit) exam?**

A PERK is a special medical forensic exam available to people who have been sexually assaulted to collect evidence that may be helpful in the investigation and prosecution of the sexual assault. You do not have to report the assault to police in order to have a PERK exam completed, but if you think you may want to report now or in the future, the sooner you have evidence collected, the better.

## **How soon should a PERK exam be done?**

As soon as possible after an assault. PERK exam often will not be done if more than five days have passed since the assault.

## **Do I have to have a PERK exam?**

No. It is entirely up to you whether to have a PERK exam. Advocates from the community based sexual and domestic violence agency or the Statewide Hotline can help you think through your options.

## **Who will pay for the PERK exam?**

The state will pay the costs. Your insurance will be billed first if you have Medicaid, Medicare, CHAMPUS, Tri-Care, or other federal insurance. If you do not want the insurance information to be sent to your home, please tell the healthcare provider so an alternative can be arranged.

## **If I have a PERK exam, do I have to report the assault?**

No. If you do not want to report to the police right away, your PERK will be sent to the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) for storage. It will be stored for a minimum of two years. You can request that the storage period be extended an additional 10 years by submitting a written request to DCLS. **NOTE:** If you are under 18 or if you are an adult who is legally dependent on another person for care, healthcare providers may have to report the assault.

## **If I choose to have a PERK exam, what do I need to know?**

1. If you have already changed clothes, showered, brushed your teeth, or had something to eat or drink, that is okay! If you have not done these things, it may help to save evidence if you wait until after your exam.
2. If at any time you are uncomfortable with any part of the exam, you have the right to skip that part or stop the exam. If you have questions about what the healthcare provider is doing, you have the right to ask. The healthcare provider will most likely ask you if you want the police to be contacted.
3. If you are not ready to report the assault or talk to the police, please let the healthcare provider or sexual assault advocate know. You do not have to talk to the police.
4. If you want to report the assault, the advocate or healthcare provider will contact the police. The police will most likely come to the hospital to talk to you to get more information about what happened. After the physical exam, the evidence obtained during the PERK will be collected by police. The advocate can accompany you while reporting the assault and help you to understanding what next steps are
5. You may be responsible for other medical costs associated with the assault. You may receive bills from the healthcare facility for medical care. If you have any questions about a bill you receive, your advocate can help you and/or you can contact the Virginia Victims Fund at [cicfmail@vwc.state.va.us](mailto:cicfmail@vwc.state.va.us) or 800.552.4007 for help.

## **What can I expect during a PERK exam?**

You can choose what happens to your body and what you're comfortable with during an exam, regardless of your age or whether or not you choose to report the assault.

Here is some of what you can expect during a PERK exam:

- Medical history: These are questions about your health, just like at a regular doctor's appointment.
- History of assault: This is the part of the exam where you use your own words to say what happened. It helps the healthcare provider understand where evidence can be collected.
- Physical evidence collection: Only if it is ok with you, physical evidence can be collected and injuries, if there are any, can be documented.
- STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) and pregnancy prevention: If you choose, the healthcare provider can offer medicines that can prevent sexually transmitted infections or reduce the possibility of pregnancy.
- Safety planning: If something feels complicated or scary to you, your advocate and healthcare provider can share ideas and resources that might help you feel safer and more supported.
- HIV Prevention: If indicated, you can be prescribed medication to protect against and reduce the risk of contracting HIV.
- If you report to police and think you may have been drugged, the healthcare provider can collect blood and/or urine.

### **I want a PERK exam, but need time to think about reporting or talking to the police. What do I need to know?**

1. Police usually try to collect other evidence from the suspect(s), witnesses, crime scene(s), and/or from you. If you decide not to talk to the police within 5 days after an assault, other evidence may be lost.
2. The sooner you report the assault to the police, the better the chances are that your case will successfully move through the criminal justice system. Advocates from your community-based sexual and domestic violence agency can talk with you about your reporting options.
3. The evidence collected from your PERK exam will be stored at the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services in Richmond for at least two years. Your privacy will be protected while you decide whether or not you want to report the assault to the police.

4. The PERK will not be opened or tested unless you choose to make a police report.

5. You can make a report to police at any time. If you decide that you want to report the assault to police, you can call 911 or your community-based sexual and domestic violence agency to help you make the call.

### **Am I able to track of the status of my PERK after the exam?**

Yes. State law requires police to deliver your PERK for analysis within 60 days. You can track its location and progress using the PERK Tracking System Victim Portal at [perk.dfs.virginia.gov](http://perk.dfs.virginia.gov). How you access the portal and what information will be visible to you depends on whether you reported to police.

If you chose not to report, you will only need your PERK ID, which should have been provided by the healthcare provider at the time of the PERK exam. Once on the portal login screen, just enter your PERK ID number and hit "Get Status" to view information about your PERK. If you reported the assault to police, you will need your PERK ID, provided by the healthcare provider at the exam and a PIN, which is provided by the police. Once on the portal login screen, first enter your PERK ID and click "Get Status". A second box titled "PIN" will appear. Here, you must enter the PIN provided by police and click "Get Status" again to view information about your PERK.

#### **If you have questions, please call:**

**Statewide Hotline** 1.800.838.8238

(text 804.793.9999 or chat:

[www.vadata.org/chat](http://www.vadata.org/chat))

**LGBTQ Helpline** 1.866.356.6998

(text 804.793.9999 or chat:

[www.vadata.org/chat](http://www.vadata.org/chat))

**Virginia Victims Fund**

1.800.552.4007

[info@virginiavictimsfund.org](mailto:info@virginiavictimsfund.org)

This brochure produced by:  
**Virginia Sexual & Domestic  
Violence Action Alliance**

[www.vsdvalliance.org](http://www.vsdvalliance.org)  
[info@vsdvalliance.org](mailto:info@vsdvalliance.org)

