



**VICTORIAN INSTITUTE
OF FORENSIC MEDICINE**



CLINICAL FORENSIC MEDICINE

**Patient
Information
Forensic Medical
Examination
FAQs**



Justice
and Community
Safety



WHY DO I NEED A FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMINATION (FME)?

If you have reported being physically or sexually assaulted, the police may refer you for a forensic medical examination.

A forensic medical examination provides an opportunity to collect forensic medical evidence to assist the police with their investigation of what happened to you and for your immediate medical needs to be dealt with. The forensic medical evidence may include documentation of any injuries that you may have and if necessary, to take forensic samples.

WHO WILL DO THE FME?

A doctor or nurse trained in forensic assessments will conduct your examination. The doctor or nurse will be from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM).

WHAT IF I START TO FEEL UNWELL DURING THE FME?

Let the examiner know immediately if you start to feel unwell. Your health and wellbeing are more important than anything else.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

- An examination will only happen with your permission (consent).
- Every part of the examination will be explained to you.

- You can ask questions at any stage.
- You can direct the examination depending on what you feel comfortable with.
- You can stop the examination at any time.

- You can ask for someone to be with you during the examination for support. The doctor or nurse may also have someone with them during the examination to assist.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY FORENSIC SAMPLES?

If forensic specimens or samples are collected from you during the examination, the examiner will give them to the police.

The police will send the samples to the Victoria Police forensic laboratory for analysis. Analysis may take several weeks/months and results will be returned to police rather than the VIFM. If you have questions about your results, you will need to contact the police officer investigating your case.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY BLOOD AND/OR URINE SAMPLES?

The examiner may take a sample of your blood and/or urine to test for alcohol and drugs. The results of the testing will be sent to the police who will be in a position to provide them to you.

This will be tested for a wide range of different drugs and medications. It is not possible for the laboratory to select which drugs are tested for. The purpose of the testing is to support the investigation of what happened to you and any results not related to that are not of direct interest to the police. If however, you have concerns, please discuss these with the examiner.

WILL I BE PHOTOGRAPHED?

The examiner may suggest that photographs be taken of any injuries to your body to assist the police investigation. You have the right to say no to any photographs of your body. If you agree to have photographs taken, this will be done during the examination or at a later date. Usually, we do NOT take photographs of breasts, genitals or any other sensitive areas of the body.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY CLOTHES?

In some instances, you may be asked to submit items of clothing for testing to help the police with their investigation. These items will be returned to you once the case is completed. Please note that returned items may contain stains or cut out areas because of testing and may therefore not be usable.

WHAT ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIS) OR PREGNANCY?

If the examination was for a sexual assault, the examiner will discuss the risks of sexually transmitted infection or pregnancy with you and will explain any necessary precautions including antibiotics or the emergency contraception and what future follow-up testing should be done.

WHAT IF I HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT MY EXAMINATION?

The examiner will be happy to answer any questions you have during the examination. If you have further questions or concerns once you leave here today you can discuss them with your counsellor or Victoria Police informant.

DETAILS OF YOUR EXAMINATION:

Today you were examined by:

(doctor/nurse to print name here)

The following forensic tests/samples were collected:

- Forensic samples (swabs)
- Urine and/or blood samples for drug and alcohol testing
- A sample of your DNA for comparison

WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN EXAMINATION?

The examiner will explain each and every part of the examination to you and will not proceed without your permission (consent).

Firstly, the examiner will ask you some questions about your medical history to understand your general health. They will then ask you some questions about what happened to you. It is best if you tell the examiner what happened in your own words. Take your time.

Sometimes the questions will be quite personal (e.g. about menstruation/your period or parts of your body). The examiner will explain the reasons for asking these questions. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of these questions, it's ok to tell the examiner you don't want to answer those questions.

Sometimes your clothes may need to be collected, you will be given a private place to undress and you will be given new clothes.

The examiner will look at your body (physical examination) for any injuries and take any

Feedback or Complaints?

If you have any concerns, complaints or feedback about your forensic medical examination, please feel free to discuss it with your CASA counsellor/advocate or let us (VIFM) know. We are very happy to receive any feedback in order to continue our best care or improve our practice.

You are welcome to contact the VIFM staff member who conducted your examination using the contact details set out above.

You may also wish to raise your concerns by writing to the VIFM. You can:

Email: complaints@vifm.org, or

Write to: Complaints team at VIFM
65 Kavanagh St, Southbank VIC 3006

If you are not satisfied with the VIFM's response to your concerns, you may wish lodge a complaint with the Health Complaints Commissioner. Further information about making a complaint to the Health Complaints Commissioner is available at www.hccc.vic.gov.au or by calling 1300 582 113.

Contact

Please liaise with your CASA counsellor and/or your Victoria Police informant regarding any