

Marital Rape

*Saving Lives...
Building Hope...
Ending Violence...*

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Historically in our country, rape has been defined as forcible sexual intercourse with a woman to whom the perpetrator was not married. This definition left a gaping hole in the rights of married women and left them little recourse for protection within their marriage. It was only in July 1993 that marital rape became illegal in all fifty states.

Although the laws against marital rape have become stricter than in years past, there are still some gaping holes in the legislation. In 33 states, for example, a husband is still exempt from prosecution for the sexual assault of his wife if she is mentally or physically impaired, unconscious, or even asleep. It is estimated that 10—14% of women are subjected to this crime every year.

Marital rape can usually be classified in one of these categories: force-only rape, battering rape, and sadistic/obsessive rape. 'Force-only' is when a husband uses only the amount of force necessary to coerce his wife. 'Battering rape' occurs as part of the pattern of abuse in a domestic violence relationship and can happen before, after, or concurrently with a physical assault. 'Sadistic/Obsessive Rape' occurs when a husband uses torture or perverse sexual acts or pornography against his partner's will.

Gynecological effects of marital rape can include any number of the following: miscarriages, still births, STDs, bladder infections, and infertility. The short and long term psychological effects can be even more devastating to the victim and can include PTSD, depression, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, intimacy issues, and negative self-image. If you have been a victim of this crime or would like more information, please contact Refuge House at (850) 681-2111.

