

Forensic Nurse Examiners Program

A law enforcement or child protection agency has referred you to UnityPoint Health – Meriter hospital to be examined by a Forensic Nurse.

What is the Forensic Nurse Examiners Program?

The Forensic Nurse Examiners program at UnityPoint Health – Meriter is staffed by registered nurses who have specialized training in the examination of victims of sexual assault and abuse. It is the only program of its kind in Dane County; however, the nurses will help victims from any county. The Forensic Nurse Examiners Program collaborates with primary care providers, law enforcement and the Dane County Rape Crisis Center.

Meriter recognizes this is a frightening, traumatic time for you. Our program is dedicated to providing comprehensive, compassionate care in a safe environment. Regardless of when the assault or abuse occurred, we encourage all victims to seek medical services to discuss both short-term and long-term health concerns. Located within our Emergency Department, the Forensic Nurse Examiners Program provides care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What can I expect when I arrive at the hospital?

When you first arrive at our Emergency Department, a triage nurse will check vital signs and ask some simple questions about your immediate needs. If there are urgent injuries, one of our emergency physicians will examine and treat those injuries. The forensic nurse will see you shortly after.

If the patient is a child, please feel free to bring a toy, blanket, pacifier or item that makes your child feel at ease. If at all possible, please do not bring other children with you. Since hungry and tired children become upset more easily, it is best if your child is fed and rested before the exam. We recommend explaining to your child that the exam is to ensure they are physically okay. We want your child to know that we are here to help, not hurt or frighten.

What can I expect during the exam?

A Forensic Nurse will provide a safe, compassionate exam at your pace. The exam may include the following:

- The nurse will ask questions about the assault or abuse, listen to you and explain your options.
- The nurse will provide a head-to-toe exam which may include photography of injuries.
- The nurse may collect evidence that could be used in a legal investigation.
- The nurse may provide information and medication to prevent pregnancy.
- The nurse will provide information, and may provide treatment, to help prevent sexually transmitted infections

How much will the exam cost?

The cost of the sexual assault exam will typically be billed to your insurance company. Commercial insurance providers, including Dean, Group Health Cooperative, Physicians Plus and Unity, as well as Medicare and Medicaid, cover these services. If you do not have insurance coverage, the exam may be paid for by the WI SAFE Fund. However, Meriter will help all patients regardless of their ability to pay.

Directions to the Forensic Nurse Examiners Program (located within the Emergency Department at UnityPoint Health - Meriter)

- From the Beltline, take the S. Park Street exit (261B).
- Turn left into the Emergency Department entrance at 202 S. Park Street.
- Park in the Emergency Services parking lot.
- Please go to the main desk in Emergency Services to check in.