

This section includes:

- **Rape/Sexual Assault Prevention**
- **Safety at Parties or in Crowds**
- **Prevention of Acquaintance Rape***
- **Avoiding Date Rape***
- **Personal Safety When Shopping**
- **and more**

RAPE/SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION

1. Do not allow anyone to enter your residence unless you know them and trust them. When you open the door to your home, you should have a storm/screen door between you and the person on the other side of your door.
2. If someone comes to your door:
 - If expecting a repairman at your home, ask in advance the name of the person who will be coming to your house. When the man arrives, ask his name (do not offer his name to him to affirm) and for identification. If all checks out, then you may let him in.
 - If someone is at your door, look out the peephole or window before opening the door. Have the chain on the door before opening it or have the screen/storm door locked between you and the visitor.
 - If you have any doubts whatsoever, do not open the door. Either tell him to go away or talk to him through the closed door. It is not advisable to ignore someone at the door as it has been documented in many communities where burglars will ring the doorbell and, if no answer, they will go around to the back door for entrance.
 - Do not assume that just because you are not alone, or have children present, that it is safe to let someone in (threatening to harm a loved one is one sure way to get you to cooperate).
3. Have good locks installed on all windows and doors.
4. If you move to a new apartment or previously owned home, have the locks changed if they have not been replaced already
5. Do not hide keys to your home or your car outside.
6. Leave lights on in the house when you are not home at night.
7. If you live alone, or will be home alone, do not tell anyone whom you do not know and trust. Be aware of who is sitting around you in restaurants, classes, etc., so that someone does not pick up your conversation about being home alone. Do not discuss this kind of information on your cell phone if you can be overheard.
8. If you live alone in an apartment, do not put your full name on the mailbox. Use your first initial and last name and add another name (fictitious) to the mailbox as well.
9. Keep shades/blinds drawn at night, so that people outside cannot see who is inside (follow this rule even if you live on a high floor of an apartment building).
10. If asked for your address and phone number by a store cashier, offer to write it down instead of saying it aloud.
11. Never put your name, address, or license plate number on your car keys.
12. Do not leave your house keys with your car keys when you leave your car keys with a car attendant, such as a car valet, or at a repair shop.

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13. Never leave a note on your door for someone stating that you are not home.
14. Make sure your telephone is in working order. Have emergency numbers near each telephone.
15. Install alarms on doors and windows.
16. If the area outside around your home is dark, install spotlights on the corners of the house. Have a switch put in the master bedroom that allows the spotlights to be turned on from the master bedroom if you hear a noise in the middle of the night.
17. Keep a flashlight and “weapon” (pepper spray, personal attack alarm, house alarm hot button, etc.) near the bed.***

****WPSN does not endorse the use of any weapons, except the personal attack alarm and house alarm remote job. Some weapons can cause unintentional results or be used against you--learn how to use any weapon, including pepper spray.*

SAFETY AT PARTIES OR IN CROWDS

The best crime prevention tip when attending a party or going to a crowded environment is to be alert to people pushing against you, coming on to you strongly, or an Uh, Oh feeling that senses potential danger. Be sure to have a PLAN should you feel uncomfortable with your surroundings.

It is your responsibility to secure your own wellbeing and the first step toward this is to be in control of yourself at all times with an alert mind. It may seem like fun to drink and get high but the consequences can devastate your life forever. Hardly worth one night of adventure.

The following will help you reduce your risk of sexual assault or assault of any kind.

1. Do not go alone unless you are meeting someone. It would be best to meet at another location and go to the party/event together.
2. Accept no drinks from strangers.
 - Be aware that drugs can be slipped into your drink without you knowing if you are not vigilant.
 - Watch your drinks being prepared and, if accepting a canned drink, open it yourself or be sure to see it being opened.
 - Do not put your drink down, unattended, to dance or go to the ladies room.
3. Do not wander off to an area that is not part of the main party/event room.
4. Have plans to leave with the person you came with - this will give you an out should someone try to talk you into leaving with him.
5. NEVER make plans to meet someone later that evening if you just met this person or it is someone you do not know well.
6. Do not drink to the point of intoxication.

PREVENTION OF ACQUAINTANCE RAPE*

**Handout from Harundale Youth and Family Service Center, Glen Burnie, Maryland.*

***Acquaintance Rape, a handout prepared by the Prince George's Hospital Center Sexual Assault Center*

Refer to the pages on Relationships — Healthy vs. Abusive and Relationships — Power & Control. It is easy to get into an acquaintance rape situation without realizing it. It could happen to anyone. However, a person can lower her chances of being in such a situation by recognizing certain signals and avoiding private contact with people sending those signals, and by maintaining a healthy level of self-esteem.

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Signals to look for:

1. **Behavior** - before he rapes, the acquaintance rapist will test his potential victim by intruding on her in some way, by violating her personal space. Such intrusion can be:
 - interrupting her conversation as if what she is saying or doing is unimportant;
 - not listening to her;
 - touching her in places or ways that are too personal;
 - making personal remarks or talking about things that she does not want to talk about because they are too personal;
 - doing what he wants regardless of what she wants.

If any of these things are happening, he is sending her signals that he does not respect her. This is the kind of relationship in which acquaintance rape can happen.

Emotional - Rapists share certain ideas and attitudes about women and about women's and men's roles. These ideas all show a distinct lack of respect for women.

- Rapists often express anger or hostility toward women, as a group or as individuals.
- They are often overly possessive or jealous.
- They tend to have unrealistic ideas about women, such as all women should serve men.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

AVOIDING DATE-RAPE**

All of us will face a time when we need to make a decision about sex. It is important to make your decision based on what you believe in, what your wishes are, and what you are comfortable with.

There may be times when you get pressure from the person you are dating to do something that you are not ready to do, that you do not feel comfortable with yet:

“You would if you love me . . .”

“I'm tired of waiting for it.”

“Maybe you're not woman enough for me.”

Or you may start getting pressure from your friends and classmates:

“You mean you haven't done it yet?”

“What are you waiting for?”

But, it is your body!!! and you and you alone have the right to decide who touches you and how they touch you. That means, of course, that you have the right to say yes. But, it also means that you have the right to say no - without explaining, justifying, or defending your decision.

If somebody touches you in a way that you are not comfortable with, you have the right to say no and to get away:

- It's okay to stand up for yourself.
- It's okay to get angry with a person who is touching you in a way that you are not comfortable with.
- It's okay to act “foolish” or “obnoxious” in order to make them stop and/or if it makes you feel more safe or comfortable.
- It's okay to get “rude” if you need to.

Always remember -

**YOU AND YOU ALONE HAVE THE
ABSOLUTE RIGHT TO DECIDE
WHO TOUCHES YOU AND HOW!**

Walking from the car to the mall (also see "Safety in Your Car")

1. Take note of your surroundings as you exit your car. If someone is loitering around and you feel uncomfortable, get back into your car and move to another entrance.
2. Walk at a good pace from your car to the entrance with your head up and your eyes looking around. This is not the time to daydream about the purchases you need to make; you can do that while inside the store.
3. While walking to or from your car and you have pepper spray or a personal attack alarm, be sure that the item is in your hand at the ready and be mentally ready to use it if necessary. Remember that pepper spray is useless outside if there is a breeze or wind.***
4. If a driver of a car asks you for directions, do not approach the car. Either respond quickly as you continue on your way or suggest that the driver to a gas station for directions.
5. If approached by someone, yell loudly for him to stop approaching you and then go quickly back into the mall or store; do not wait for his reaction.

While shopping

1. When paying for purchases, do not verbally tell the cashier your address or phone number [if needed]; write this information down instead. No one else has to know this information about you.
2. You do not have to give your telephone number when paying with a charge card.
3. Avoid ATM machines which are out of the way. Many malls have such machines inside the mall itself. If you have to use one outside the mall, do not keep your back to traffic the entire time. You can position yourself so that you can be looking around you during the transaction. Try to schedule an ATM stop during a time which would usually have lots of people and activity going on (not a time when you could be isolated from help if necessary).
4. Use the restroom inside the department stores if possible instead of those provided by the mall itself. Some mall restroom may be down a hall away from the mall activity.
5. Avoid hanging your purse on the hook at the top of the restroom stall door. Thieves have been known to grab bags from over the door and you would be unable to run immediately after the thief.
6. If possible, use a fanny pack instead of a purse. Carry only the items you need to pay for the purchases (your checkbook, a charge card, cash, etc.). Ideal would be cargo pants with pockets that either have a button flap or zipper. [If you have to carry a purse, hold it close to your body.]
7. If you are carrying a purse, keep the car and house keys in a pocket of your clothing or coat. Should your purse get stolen, you will still have your car keys. You should carry house and car keys on separate key chains. Remember, you probably have your address inside your purse (on your checks, driver's license, etc.). Notify police immediately and call home to notify your family. Fortunately, you will have your keys to your car and house in your pocket.
8. When traveling on escalators, notice who is around you. Keep a grip on your purse. Do not daydream!
9. If you have to use the elevators . . .
 - If someone is on the elevator when the door opens and this person makes you uncomfortable, do not get in.
 - If you are in the elevator, the doors open and you are uncomfortable with someone who just entered the elevator, get off.

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- When in the elevator, stand by the operation panel with your back to the side wall so you can see the interior of the elevator. You will have control of the panel in case someone harasses you or attacks you - you can push the buttons. NEVER push the stop or emergency buttons because the elevator will stop; this is what the attacker would like. You want to get out of there. Also, if you push every button, you have allowed yourself numerous opportunities to either get off or attract attention should anyone on the floors be waiting to use the elevator. If the perpetrator hits you while you are pushing the buttons, "take the hit" as Det. J.J. Bittenbinder says. Your interest is in continuing to push the buttons, getting off, and keeping from being more seriously injured.
10. If you feel that someone is following you while you are in the mall, go to the security office or to a service desk in any store and ask for security.
 11. Be careful in crowded situations. Make sure to hold onto your packages and purse. If you are bumped,

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