

Install effective locks on all doors and windows - and use them. If strangers telephone or come to your door, don't admit that you are alone. Know who you are letting into your home. Can you trust this person? The same issue of trust applies when considering going into someone else's home or working alone with anyone. If you sense any danger, ask a friend to accompany you. Trust your instincts! If you are uneasy about being alone with someone, avoid situations where only the two of you are present. Use your peephole viewer to see who is outside before you open the door. Never let a stranger into your home. Check the identification of any sales or service persons before letting them in. It is okay to ask them to wait while you call the company to verify that someone has been sent to your home. If someone asks to use your phone, ask for the phone number and make the call for them. If you live alone, use your last name and first initial only on mail boxes and in phone directories. If you live in an apartment, avoid being alone in the laundry room or parking lot, especially at night. If you come home alone and find an open door/window or any signs of forced entry, do not enter your home. Go to the nearest phone and call the police. If you have children, make certain to let them know and practice these procedures also. Also teach your children not to let others come into your home without your permission.

While Walking

Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you - especially if you are alone or it is dark. Travel with a friend if possible! Stay in well-lit areas as much as possible. Walk confidently at a steady pace on the side of the street facing traffic. Rapists target people who demonstrate a lack of confidence or appear vulnerable. Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes, and alleys where someone may hide. If you think you are being followed, walk quickly to an area where there are lights and people. If a car appears to be following you, turn and walk in the opposite direction. Record the license plate number. If someone bothers you or you feel in danger, don't be embarrassed to attract attention. Make a scene by screaming, yelling, using a whistle, or breaking a window. It is better to remain safe than be placed in an unsafe situation.

While Driving

Drive with the doors locked and the windows up. Keep your car in good working order with plenty of gas. Park in well-lighted areas and lock doors.

If you are being followed, don't drive home. Go to the nearest police or public place and honk your horn. Have your car keys in your hand so that you don't have to linger before entering your car. Keys can also serve as a possible weapon against an attacker. Check the back seat before entering your car. If your car breaks down, open the hood and attach a white cloth to the car antenna. If someone stops to help, stay in your locked car and ask them to call the police or a garage.

If you are attacked

Remember your main concern must always be your safety. No one can tell you whether you should fight back, try to talk your way out, or submit. **IT DEPENDS ON YOU AND THE SITUATION.** However, your best defense is to be prepared - know your options ahead of time. Your safety may depend upon your ability to stay cool and calm. Consider your alternatives if confronted by a rapist. Practice possible responses so that you can recall them even under the stress of a real encounter. Try to think clearly so that you can quickly evaluate your resources and options. Your #1 priority is to survive the attack. Your decision on what action to take will depend on the circumstances at that moment. Again, only you can decide if you fight back, submit, or try to talk your way out of the attack. It may be more advisable to submit than to resist and risk severe injury or death. Remember that submission is not consent! Talk to the attacker and try to calm him/her by using words or gestures to persuade him/her not to carry out the attack. Try to discourage the attacker by claiming to be sick, pregnant, or H.I.V. positive or by crying, pretending to faint, or acting mentally incapacitated. Running can be an option, but only if you can outrun the attacker or there is a safe place with people nearby. Screaming or using a personal alarm can be an option, if someone is nearby to help. Struggling or fighting back can be options, but all hits or kicks must be forceful and aimed at vulnerable areas and must incapacitate the attacker. If you are sexually assaulted, go to a safe place and call the police, a friend, a rape crisis center, or family member. The sooner you make a police report, the greater the chances the attacker will be caught, and the sooner you may receive medical attention, support, and counseling. Remember you are the victim. You have nothing to feel guilty or ashamed about.

