

# Rape Prevention

The most important thing you can do to prevent a rape is to determine right now that you will NOT be a victim. Carry yourself with the confidence of that decision. Rapists are violent criminals and can spot a "victim" a mile away. This page contains information which will help you behave in a manner consistent with your decision that you will not be a victim.

**This page does not cover all possible actions but is intended to help you avoid being a victim.**

## Facts 1 Statistics

Rape is a violent crime, a hostile attack, an attempt to hurt and humiliate. It is NOT the result of 'uncontrolled passions'.

Rape can happen to anyone - children, grandmothers, students, wives, mothers and even males. Rape can occur anywhere and at anytime, in public or in your own home, day or night.

Rapists are not necessarily strangers.

One out of four women will be raped sometime during her lifetime.

Over 80 percent of all sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance of the victim, but almost half of these victims tell no one about the rape.

Nationally, rape is the most under-reported crime.

Women ages 16-25 are three times more likely to be raped than women in any other age group.

## U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 1992

Rape is a violent and criminal act. It doesn't matter where it is committed or if the victim knows the assailant. It is often difficult to tell just by looking at someone if he is a rapist. He may be a stranger or someone you know and trust. He may even be a family member.

Anyone can become a victim of rape and/or sexual assault.

## Some myths about rape:

- Myth: Any woman who agrees to be alone with a man deserves to get raped.
- Fact: No one, male or female, deserves to be raped, no matter what the situation.
- Myth: Women who do not fight back haven't really been raped.
- Fact: If you have been forced to have sex against your will, you have been raped.
- Myth: If no weapon was used, you were not raped.
- Fact: A rapist may use his fists, verbal threats, isolation -- anything that will work to overpower you.
- Myth: Agreeing to some sexual contact means a woman has agreed to intercourse.
- Fact: Everyone has the right to say "no" if they choose not to continue sexual activity, regardless of what has already occurred.
- Myth: A husband cannot rape his wife.
- Fact: Most courts declared marital rape a criminal offence.
- Myth: Males cannot be raped.
- Fact: 1 out of 7 males are sexually assaulted by the time they reach adulthood.
- Fact: It is never the victim who causes the rape!

## U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. 1992

## **DATE RAPE**

While rape is fully the responsibility of the perpetrator, the following guidelines are intended to reduce the possibility of confusion, increase one's personal safety and reduce the risk of being accused of rape.

### **REDUCING THE RISK OF DATE RAPE**

#### ***Guidelines for women:***

- Passivity, submissiveness and coyness can be dangerous, and may create an atmosphere of sexual aggression.
- At all times: be aware of your sexual boundaries, how far you feel comfortable going with the man you are with.
- Be aware of specific situations in which you don't feel safe and relaxed.
- Trust your gut feelings.
- Be aware of stereotypes which prevent you from self-expression, such as "anger isn't feminine," or "being assertive isn't feminine."
- Make sure your date knows and respects your feelings about "no" meaning "no."
- Know where to stop aggressive behaviour.
- Remember that alcohol and/or drugs are involved in a large percentage of acquaintance rapes.
- Learn and practice assertive, honest communication skills with the men you date.

#### ***Guidelines for men:***

- Do not objectify women. See them as people with feelings.
- Learn to respect women's sexual boundaries.
- Pay attention to a woman's body language as well as to what she is saying (e.g., if she stiffens up, she is probably not comfortable with how far you are going).
- Be self-aware. Know when you are starting to cross the line.
- Even if you have always believed that women sometimes say "no" when they mean "yes," always act as if "no" means "no."
- It's never OK to force yourself on a woman, even if you think that she has been teasing and leading you on.
- Remember that alcohol and/or drugs are involved in the majority of acquaintance rape.
- Support women you date in being assertive and honest, not passive.

### **PREVENTION TIPS**

First, know the facts about rape. Become aware of locations and situations where rape might occur, and avoid them. 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.

## ***Outside:***

- Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you - especially if you are alone or it is dark. Avoid dark streets.
- Don't walk alone, especially at night.
- Walk at a steady pace with a self-assured stride.
- If you are followed, get away fast, change directions, walk into crowded areas.
- Avoid passing close to bushes, dark doorways and other places of concealment.
  
- Have your key ready in your hand so the door to your home or car can be opened immediately.
  
- If a driver asks directions, don't get too close to the car.
  
- Maintain a secure grip on your purse, preferably under your arm.
  
- If in danger, scream and run, yell "fire," or break a window to attract attention.
  
- Walk on the side of the street facing traffic.
  
- Always walk as though you have a destination. Be aware of who and what is around you. Don't become isolated.
  
- Walk with a friend whenever possible.
  
- Avoid poorly lit areas at night.
  
- Walk facing oncoming traffic.
  
- Keep a firm grip on handbags and packages. Carry a minimum of cash.
  
- Be discriminating about any personal information you tell others.
  
- Beware of strangers who are out to "protect" you.
  
- Don't be overly accommodating to men you don't know.
  
- When planning to meet friends, let them know about arrival time and mode of travel.
  
- Use busier bus stops, rather than deserted ones. Be aware of who is around you.

## ***Walking/Jogging***

- Avoid walking/jogging alone, especially at night or in isolated areas. If you must frequently walk alone at night, vary your route.
  
- Don't wear headphones, you may not hear an attacker's approach.
  
- Never hitchhike or pick up a hitchhiker.
  
- Look around when you're at a bus stop or train station to be sure you are not being followed.
  
- If you suspect someone is following you, cross the street and keep crisscrossing from one side to the other.
  
- Avoid shortcuts like alleys, backyards or parking lots.
  
- Don't walk close to shrubbery, doorways and alleys where rapists can hide.
  
- Dress in a manner which allows you freedom of movement.
  
- Arrange things you carry so you can easily get your keys.

- Let someone know your destination, route and time of return.
- Never accept a ride from a stranger.
- If you suspect that someone is following you, by foot or in a car, don't go home (or they will know where you live). Go to a trusted neighbour or to a public place to call police, or directly to police station.
- Don't hitchhike.
- Be very careful using outside ATMs at night or in unfamiliar surroundings.
- When on the street, walk facing oncoming traffic. It will be harder for someone to pull you into a car and abduct you.
- Tell someone where you'll be and what time you're supposed to return, or if you will be with someone you don't know well.
- Try to not overload yourself with packages. If you must have your hands full, visualize how you would respond if approached, how you would get your hands free, etc.
- Do not read while walking or standing on the street.
- If you wear a purse with a shoulder strap, be prepared to let it go if snatched. Otherwise you may be hurt if the mugger knocks you down and drags you while fleeing with your purse.
- If someone asks you for directions, and if you choose to reply, remain at least two arms lengths away.
- Clogs, high heels, and tight skirts are hard to run and fight in. Capes, scarves, and long necklaces are easy to grab.
- Modify your fashion style, or wear comfortable clothing when walking alone (change into dress-up clothes later), or think through how you would fight in your dress-up clothes (for example, kicking off your high heels or hiking your skirt up around your hips before starting to run or kick)
- Avoid being on the street alone if you are upset or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or have someone go with you.
- When dropping someone off at their home, make sure they are safely inside before driving away. Have them do the same for you.

### ***At home:***

- Many rapes occur in or near the victim's home. One way to prevent sexual assault is to practice good home security.
- Install a wide-angle door viewer.
- Do not open your door automatically to strangers.
- Keep windows and doors secured with adequate locks.
- Women who live alone should list only last names and first initial in phone directories and on mailboxes.
- Close your curtains or blinds at night to prevent strangers from seeing you are alone.
- Be alert to protect your neighbours and yourself never mention to a stranger that a neighbour lives alone or is at home alone.

- When a stranger asks to use your telephone, do not permit him to enter. Offer to summon emergency assistance or make the call for him.
- If you come home and find a door or window open or signs of forced entry, don't go in. Go to the nearest phone and call the police.
- Have keys ready when approaching the door.
- Never leave a spare key in a hiding place outside.
- Keep doors and windows locked. Have locks changed when you move into a new home.
- Do not give personal information to a stranger over the phone. Hang up on obscene phone callers.
- Never let a stranger on the phone or at the door know you are home alone.
- Never open the door to strangers or allow them into your home for any reason. Ask for identification.
- Notify friends or neighbours if you are going away.
- Avoid deserted areas within the building when alone: stairwells, laundry, trash, elevators, and storage areas.
- Be sure you lock all doors. If you leave your residence for a only short time, to take out the garbage or get the mail, always lock your doors.
- Install dead bolt locks and use them! Do not rely on chain locks.
- Keep windows secured. If existing locks are insufficient, install new ones. Lock sliding glass doors.
- Make sure the entry way to your home is well lit.
- If you use a telephone answering machine, be careful about the kind of message you record. Use "we" rather than "I" don't give your phone number, and don't give any information that implies you are not at home. An example is, "- can't come to the phone right now, leave your number and we'll call you back. "
- A message with a male's voice in the recording can also be helpful.
- Consider installing a home security system. A home alarm can be an effective deterrent to criminal intruders. A variety of systems are available, ranging from inexpensive, battery-operated door models to monitored, motion detecting systems costing several thousand dollars.
- Never open your door to a stranger. Criminals can get a good look at you and your home by posing as a door-to-door salesperson, a neighbour who has lost a pet, or a floral deliverer at the wrong address.
- Install a wide-angle door viewer. These are an inexpensive aid for identifying people at your doorstep. If children are allowed to open the door under certain circumstances, install a second viewer at your child's height.
- Never tell a stranger that you are home alone. If they ask for your husband or the man of the house, tell them he is taking a nap and cannot be disturbed.
- Do not broadcast your plans in public where others can overhear. Burglars can use this information to determine whether your home might be an easy target in your absence.
- Keep your house or apartment well lit. Use exterior sensory night-lights and interior lights

plugged into timers to create the illusion of an occupied home at all times.

- Do not leave windows open or uncovered. Prevent casual observers from looking directly into your home. During the day, draw drapes or position blinds to allow only enough light for plants. At night, cover your windows completely.
- Keep trees and shrubbery around your home well-trimmed. Overgrown bushes and trees often provide excellent hiding places for criminals.
- Plant defensive shrubbery around your home, especially beneath windows. Bushes that feature thorns or stiff, spiky leaves are not good hiding places for criminals.
- Lock your doors when working in your yard, attic, laundry room, or any place away from your home's entry areas. While you are busy elsewhere, burglars could easily enter your home unnoticed.

### ***On the telephone:***

- If you receive an obscene phone call hang up immediately.
- Never give out personal information over the phone.
- Do not give information to strangers on the telephone. Thieves often target homes using information obtained from telephone surveys.
- Consider keeping a separate line or cellular phone as a security device. Taking one phone off the hook renders other units on that line inoperable. Using a separate line or cellular phone in your bedroom is a good precaution.
- Never give important information like travel plans or credit card numbers using a cellular phone. For under one hundred dollars, anyone can buy scanning equipment and listen in on your cellular phone conversations.

### ***Car safety:***

- Keep windows rolled up and doors locked.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Make sure your car has plenty of gas and is in good running condition.
- Check the back seat of the car before you get in. Someone could be hiding there.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- 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.
- Join an automobile club (for emergency service, etc.).
- Don't park your car in isolated and unlit areas. Be cautious in parking garages. Always check in the back seat before you get in.
- Have car keys in hand before reaching your car so you can get in quickly.
- Lock doors immediately upon entering the car.
- Plan ahead. Know your destination and route. Carry a map.
- Drive on well-travelled and well-lit roads whenever possible. Carry a car phone if you regularly travel isolated roads.

- Never leave keys in the ignition. Lock the car and take the keys.
- Before exiting or entering your car look around for loiterers.
- Check Inside and underneath your car before you unlock the door and enter.
- When stopped at a light or in traffic, keep your car in gear.
- If you feel threatened, hold your hand on the horn
- Getting a ticket for safely running a light is better than being carjacked and seriously injured.
- If think you are being followed, never drive home or pull over in a deserted area. Drive to the nearest police station, fire station, petrol station, or well-lit building and honk your horn until help arrives
- Check frequently in your rear view mirror.
- Do not stop to aid a disabled vehicle especially at night.
- Use a two-piece key ring with your car keys separate from your other important keys.
- If something or someone strikes you as out of place or threatening, drive away.
- Check your surroundings before getting out of the car
- If you are accosted in a parking lot, away from your own vehicle, consider rolling underneath a nearby car. It is difficult to force anyone out from under a vehicle.

## **HITCHHIKING**

### ***Hitchhiking is courting danger and death.***

- Look in the car: back seat and note the number plates.
- Ask the driver where he/she is going first, then state your destination. Know where you are going and how to get there.
- Sit near a door that works and to which you have easy access.
- Say that someone is meeting you at your destination.
- Never accept a ride in a car with more than one passenger.
- Do not have the driver stop at your door, walk a short distance to it.

### ***On Public Transportation***

- Do not tell anyone on the bus or subway where you are going.
- Stay awake and alert.
- Have exact change ready.
- Try to sit near the driver.
- If you sense someone is following you when you get off, walk toward a populated area. Do not walk directly home.

## **At Work**

- Never work alone in your office, especially before or after hours. Discuss your safety with your supervisor.
- Always let the front desk or night staff know you are in the building after hours.
- Use the "buddy system." Always walk with someone else to and from the work site.
- If you work in an isolated area, discuss your safety with your supervisor.
- Report poorly lit areas surrounding the work site and inadequate staffing at work site entrances.
- Always have the police emergency phone number at your desk or programmed into your phone.
- Discuss your safety concerns with your supervisor before accepting work before or after regular working hours.

## **MISCELLANEOUS TIPS**

Maintain your personal space. Stay alert! If a person moves inside your comfort zone, move away. If that person persists, run.

Be alert when leaving stores or shopping malls. This is a time when criminals know you are carrying cash, check books, credit cards, or valuable merchandise.

Don't use outside ATMs at night, or in unfamiliar or unsafe surroundings. This is another time when criminals know you are carrying cash.

Avoid filling your arms with packages. You might have to make more trips, but keep one arm and hand free whenever possible.

Avoid stairwells in parking garages. Try walking down the auto ramp instead. As long as you watch for cars, the ramp is much safer.

When on the street, walk facing oncoming traffic. A person walking with traffic can be followed, forced into a car, and abducted more easily than a person walking against traffic.

If you are on an elevator and someone threatening gets on, quickly step off the elevator. Otherwise, press several buttons for upcoming floors and get off at your first opportunity. (Do not press the **STOP** button.)

Approach with extreme caution any entryway where normal lighting is not functioning. Removing, unscrewing, or breaking bulbs in such places is a common tactic of criminals.

Carry several dollar bills folded inside a ten dollar bill. If accosted in a robbery, you can throw the "chump change" several feet away and the robber may scramble after it, allowing you a few moments to escape.

When blow drying your hair or taking a shower lock your door, set your resident alarm and place your dog inside to alert you should someone attempt to gain entry.

Don't give your phone number or address to a store clerk verbally. You don't know who else is in line.

## **DEFENDING YOURSELF**

The information provided above is useful, but  
**NOTHING CAN REPLACE REGULAR SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING.**

Knowing what you are physically capable of and practicing it consistently will give you the knowledge and confidence to escape many dangerous situations.

Depending on her capabilities, a woman has choices regarding how to best defend herself But -- no tactic is foolproof.

Whether a rapist is a stranger or an acquaintance, the same tactics may be used to resist or escape.

What you do depends on the kind of person you are, your assailant and the situation.

Being prepared can be the best defence against an attacker. Imagine what you would do if attacked -consider your abilities and coping style. If attacked, act immediately!