

Personal Safety Tips for Seniors

Crime is frightening for everyone! You may be concerned about burglary, fraud, muggings, and purse snatchings. However, you don't have to feel helpless. You can learn how to reduce your chances of becoming a crime victim. You can start by learning some basic crime prevention information. You don't necessarily need physical strength, agility, speed, or expensive security devices. You **do** need to be **alert, cautious, and confident!**

At Home:

Keep doors locked

- Install easy-to-use deadbolt locks.
- Don't attach an ID tag to your key ring.
- Install new locks if you move to a new home or lose your key.
- Keep garage and basement doors locked at all times.

Secure windows

- Draw the curtains and blinds at night.
- Don't leave your windows open at night.

Install and use a peephole

- Never open the door to strangers or let them know you are home alone. Ask service people for an ID before you open the door. Call to verify the service request.
- Remember, chain locks can be forced open.
- If someone asks to use your phone, make the call for him or her.

Never let a stranger into your home.

Consider a pet

- Even a small dog can provide some protection besides companionship.

Protect valuables

- Keep valuables in the bank or a safety deposit box.
- Have your Social Security or retirement check deposited directly.
- Mark your valuables (TV, DVD player, computer equipment).
- Keep an inventory list of your valuables and note model and serial numbers. Videotape your home and take photos of your valuables. Keep a copy of the list, video, and photos in your safety deposit box.

When you go out:

Secure your home

- Make sure all exterior doors and windows are secured.
- Set your lights on timers, change them every occasionally.
- Never hide a house key in a common area.

Street precautions

- Always be alert to your surroundings.
- Walk at night with a friend.
- Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes, and alleys.
- Make eye contact with people when walking.
- If you are carrying a purse, don't dangle, keep it close to your body.
- When you are in a store, never leave your purse in your shopping cart.
- Don't carry any more cash than is necessary.

Vehicle security

- Always lock your car doors when you get into the car.
- Keep your passenger window rolled up.
- Keep your purse on the floor next to you (not on the seat)!
- At night, drive on streets that you are familiar with and well lit.

Park smart

- If you have a garage, use it. Lock your car. Don't leave your key fob.
- If you have to park in your driveway, hide your garage door opener.
- In parking lots, park as close to the store as you can, or under a light.
- Lock valuables or packages in the trunk or keep them out of sight.
- Take your parking stub with you-don't leave it in your car.

Know what to do if you are the victim of a crime:

If your home is burglarized while you are out:

- Don't go in if you suspect someone entered your home while you were away. Call for police assistance!

If someone breaks into your home while you are there:

- Get out if you can.
- Don't confront the burglar.
- Lock the door to the room you are in or lock yourself in the bathroom if you are unable to leave your home safely.
- Call 9-1-1 immediately.

Let law enforcement officials help:

- Report any crime, attempted crime, or suspicious activity and provide as much information as you can (height/weight, license plates, etc.).