

Assault—a violent physical attack—can be one of the most devastating crimes of all. Like most crimes, however, assault can often be prevented. Here are a few things that *you* can do to help reduce your risk of being attacked.

At home

- Make sure all windows and doors in your home can be locked securely, particularly sliding glass doors. Use the locks. Keep entrances well-lit.
- Install a peephole in the door—and use it.
- Check the identification of any sales or service persons before letting them in.
- Don't let any stranger into your home when you're alone—no matter what the reason or how dire the emergency is said to be. Offer to make an emergency phone call while the person waits outside.
- Never give the impression that you are home alone if strangers telephone or come to the door.
- If you live alone, use only your last name and initials on mail boxes and in phone directories.
- Get to know your neighbors—people you can turn to if you're worried.
- If you live in an apartment, avoid being in the laundry room or garage by yourself, especially at night.
- If you come home and find a door or window open or signs of a forced entry, don't go in. Go to the nearest phone and call the police.

While walking

- Always be alert to your surroundings and the people around you.
- Try to stay in well-lit areas.
- Walk confidently at a steady pace on

the side of the street facing traffic.

- Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes and alleys.
- Wear clothes and shoes that give you freedom of movement.
- Don't walk alone at night and always avoid areas where there are few people.
- Be careful when people stop you for directions. Always reply from a distance, and never get too close to the car.
- If you are in trouble, attract help any way you can. Scream, yell for help, or yell "Fire!"
- If you feel you're being followed, walk to a well-populated area.

While driving

- Keep your car in good working order and the gas tank at least half full.
- Park in well-lit areas and lock the doors, even if you'll only be gone a short time.
- When you return to your car, have the key ready and check the front and rear seats and floor before getting in.
- Drive with all the doors locked.
- If you get a flat tire, drive carefully on it until you reach a safe, well-lit and well-travelled area.
- If your car breaks down, put the hood up and the hazard lights on. Use flares if you have them, and tie a white cloth to the antenna. Stay inside the car, with the doors locked. If someone stops to help, don't get out of the car—roll down the window slightly and ask the person to call the police or a tow service for you.
- Don't stop to assist a stranger whose car has broken down. Instead, help by driving to the nearest phone and calling police to help.
- Exercise extra caution when using underground and enclosed parking areas.

Try not to enter alone.

- If you are being followed, don't drive home. Go to the nearest police or fire station and honk your horn. If that is not possible, drive to an open gas station or other business where you can safely call the police. Don't leave your car unless you are certain you can get inside the building safely. Try to obtain the license plate number and description of the car following you.
- If possible, have a cellular phone in your car for use in emergencies.

If you are attacked

There is no single strategy that always works. Remember these tips:

- Keep your head. Stay as calm as possible, think rationally and evaluate your resources and options.
- It may be more advisable to submit than to resist and risk severe injury or death. You will have to make this decision based on the circumstances. Be especially careful if your attacker has a weapon.
- Keep assessing the situation as it is happening. If one strategy doesn't work, try another. Possible options in addition to nonresistance are negotiating, stalling for time, distracting the assailant and fleeing to a safe place, verbal assertiveness, screaming to attract attention, and physical resistance.
- Stay alert and observant so that you can better describe your attacker and the assault to the police.

After an attack

- Go to a safe place and call the police. The sooner you make the report, the greater the chances the attacker will be caught.

- Do not destroy any clothing you were wearing at the time of the assault. Do not disturb anything in the area where the assault took place.
- Write down a description of the attacker and the circumstances of the assault. Police need all the information they can get about the assailant.

Take action

- Practice being alert and observant. You can avoid many threatening situations, and if you are attacked, you will be better able to describe the assailant to the police.
- Ask your Neighborhood Watch leader to organize a workshop on prevention of assaults.
- If someone you know has been attacked, be a good friend. Lend an ear and suggest others who can help.