

# PERSONAL SECURITY

**I**ncidents of violence can occur anywhere at anytime. Trust your instinct that something may be wrong, and use these guidelines to reduce your vulnerability. Remember though, whether or not you choose to use the options, no one has the right to harm you.

## SECURITY IN YOUR CAR

- ◆ Keep car doors locked and windows closed at all times.
- ◆ If you have car trouble, raise the hood and stay in the vehicle. If someone offers assistance, either roll the window down just enough to talk to them or write them a note. Ask them to stop at a phone and call the police.
- ◆ Do not stop to help a stranger in a stalled vehicle. Go to a safe place and report the stalled vehicle to police.
- ◆ Don't pick up hitchhikers.
- ◆ If someone tries to break into your car while you are in it, honk the horn in short and long bursts and try to drive away.
- ◆ If you are being followed, don't go home. Drive to the nearest police or fire station or an open gas station - any place with people around.
- ◆ Park in well-lit areas that are close to your destination.
- ◆ Always have your keys ready to unlock the car door and enter without delay. You can appear vulnerable if you look for your keys as you approach your car.
- ◆ Carry a small light on your key chain to see the car or house door lock easier.



**Above all, be observant and aware of your surroundings at all times.**

- ◆ Keep your car maintained. Your gas tank should always be at least half full.
- ◆ If security staff are available to walk you to your car, don't be embarrassed to ask for an escort. Most major malls offer this type of service.
- ◆ Check inside your car before getting in.
- ◆ If you leave your keys with a parking attendant or at a service station, leave only the car (not your house) key. If possible, leave a "valet" key (one that doesn't work on the trunk), and put your valuables in the trunk. Take your garage door opener, registration, and insurance card with you.
- ◆ Purchase or lease a cellular phone. Keep it charged or buy a cigarette lighter adapter for power and recharging.

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## SECURITY AT HOME

- ◆ Know your neighbors and learn who can be called for assistance.
- ◆ Use only first initials and last names on mailboxes and in phone books.
- ◆ Change the locks when you move into a new residence.
- ◆ Don't hide spare keys outside. If you choose to do so, don't put them near the door. Make the hiding spot as obscure as possible, and don't tell anyone where it is.
- ◆ Check identification when repair people, salespeople, utility workers, or others come to the door. Don't hesitate to call and check them out or refuse entrance if something feels wrong or if they cannot provide proof of their identity.
- ◆ If you let someone in and have second thoughts, be assertive. Tell them to leave or leave yourself. Pretend you are not alone.
- ◆ Instruct children and babysitters not to give out information about who is home, who is out, or how long the situation will last.
- ◆ Don't leave notes on your door for others or allow solicitor's material to remain on your doorknob since they advertise your absence.
- ◆ If you suspect your home has been broken into, don't go in; go someplace else and call 911.
- ◆ Always lock doors when doing yard work or otherwise spending time in the yard. Keep your keys with you at all times. If you have a portable phone, take it with you.

## SECURITY ON THE STREET

- ◆ Stay on populated, well-lit streets. Avoid shrubbery, dark areas near buildings, and other places an attacker may hide. Avoid shortcuts through alleys, vacant lots, and other deserted places.
- ◆ Look around as you walk and be aware of your surroundings. Make it difficult for anyone to take you by surprise. Walk confidently at a steady pace, and make eye contact.
- ◆ Avoid secluded or deserted areas and businesses.
- ◆ Carry something that can make a loud noise that can scare off possible attackers.
- ◆ On public transportation, sit near the driver.
- ◆ If you have taken a ride in a cab or from a friend, ask the driver to wait and watch until you are safely inside your destination.
- ◆ Be cautious about revealing cash or credit cards.
- ◆ Try to limit the number of items you carry.
- ◆ If you carry a handbag, hold it close to your body with fastener closed and turned toward your body so a thief can't grab it and cause injury or knock you down. "Fanny packs" keep your personal items close to you while keeping your hands free. Be aware of where the zipper is and keep a close eye on it.
- ◆ Don't wear headphones. They block your ability to hear someone approach you.
- ◆ Trust your instincts, and don't hesitate to remove yourself from the situation. Be willing to make a scene or create a disturbance if necessary. Crimes such as rape are usually not committed by strangers, but by people who know their victims. Your safety may depend on a quick and decisive reaction.

