

Protect yourself

By the time Carolyn left work she was really tired. She could hardly wait to get into her car, go home and relax.

To a potential criminal, Carolyn may have appeared to be an easy victim -- alone, tired and distracted. Fortunately, Carolyn was aware of her role in crime prevention, and was prepared to act.

She had parked her car under a light post. She knew she had to be alert and aware of her surroundings. Carolyn walked with a purpose and put her keys in her hand before she set out for her car.

At her car, Carolyn saw a suspicious man watching her and realized her precautions had been worthwhile.

She promptly drove off, noted his description and decided to report him to the police.

Outdoors

- Tell others where you're going and when you are expected to return. Arrange to check in with them if you want.
- Walk with purpose. Be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times
- Follow the safest route possible. Walk on the side of the street where you can best see around you.
- Have your house keys or car keys ready in your hand
- Avoid overburdening yourself with parcels. Carry your purse close to your body but do not wrap it around your neck, shoulder or hand.
- If you suspect you are being followed, cross the street and go directly to the nearest well lit or populated area. If you still feel you are being followed, turn and in a loud voice say, "Stop following me." Go to an occupied building or flag down a taxi and ask the driver to call the police.
- Never be afraid to draw attention to the fact that you feel at risk.
- Carry only the cash and credit cards that you need
- It is dangerous to hitch-hike or get into a car with a driver who is asking for directions.

At home or work

Remember, many crimes, especially sexual and spousal assaults, as well as the abuse of the elderly, disabled and children, are committed by people the victim knows. If this happens to you, tell someone you know and call the police.

- Be a good neighbour and friend. Report anything or anyone suspicious to the Police. Be ready to help others.
- If someone makes you feel uneasy, let them know. Talk to someone else about it.
- If you work late, let someone know.
- Use only your last name and initials on your mailbox, building and telephone directory. If you live alone, consider putting another name beside your own.
- Ensure that you keep doors and windows secure. Have a door viewer, deadbolt lock and safety chain installed
- When you move change all exterior locks
- Ask for and inspect credentials of delivery and service people - even police officers - before you allow them to enter
- Leave interior and exterior lights on to discourage prowlers.
- If you arrive at your home or workplace and suspect there has been a break-in, go immediately to a neighbour and call the police.

- Avoid giving out personal information on the telephone. Never say you are alone. Discourage obscene callers by using the "No Reaction" tactic and hang up immediately. If you receive another call, notify the police.

Elevators

- If possible use the elevator with families people you know. Stand by the door near the controls and keep your back to the side wall

On the transit system

- Sit near the bus or streetcar driver.
- Remember, on the subway, the first car and the car with the amber light on the outside have T.T.C. personnel on board
- Use the 'yellow alarm strip' on the subway when necessary
- Be alert for people watching or following you.
- Note the locations of telephones on the platforms and in stations that can be used to get help.

In your car

- Always keep your car doors locked. Look inside the car before entering and lock the doors when you are inside
- If you suspect you are being followed by another vehicle, drive to the nearest police station, service station or restaurant and blow your horn.
- If you have car trouble, raise the hood, get back in your car and lock it. If someone offers assistance, remain in the car and ask that person to go call for help.
- Do your part. If you see a motorist in trouble, stop at the next telephone booth and call for help.

If you are assaulted

- There is no right or wrong response to a sexual assault situation. You must use your own judgement in deciding what to do.
- Purses and valuables can be replaced. It is not worth risking personal injury for property.
- Remember that surprise and speed can be used in your favour. Run and yell if there is an opportunity.
- Call the police as soon as possible.
- Try to remember points of identification about the suspect and, if possible, write this information down while it is fresh in your memory.
- Consider taking a self defence course that teaches awareness, avoidance and action.

This information will not stop crime, but following these guidelines will reduce the chance of a crime being committed against you.

Personal safety is the responsibility of each of us, as well as your community.

You can help by:

- Following these guidelines.
- Teaching others, especially children, about them.

- Being a vigilant neighbour and reporting, suspicious activities to the police.
- Joining a local crime prevention program.
- Knowing about local organizations which provide information and support.

Your local police station will have information on senior citizen and child safety.