

Rape Prevention Strategies

“Crime prevention is a technique of eliminating opportunities for the commission of crime.”

While we are constantly made aware of the dangers of crime, drugs, rape, gangsters, etc, it is essential that we are pro-active in our efforts to avoid being affected by crime. By being aware, a woman reduces the likelihood of being raped. This does not mean all rapes can be prevented. Rapists commit rape; you can't take responsibility for the actions of a criminal.

INTRODUCTION

- Avoid places, times and circumstances that create a risk situation.
- Should you be attacked, evaluate the situation and environment and look for a means of escape.
- Some women have avoided rape by merely talking their way out of the situation or by feigning insanity or idiocy or by resisting.
- A kick in the groin is not always successful as assailants instinctively protect this area and you may lose your balance.
- If you decided to retaliate physically, remember that your first priority is escape. Act quickly and decisively to throw your attacker off guard while you escape.
- Try to remember some definite mark of identification, colour of hair, eyes, any oddity such as scar or speech impediment. This information is valuable to the police.
- A rapist looks for someone who appears vulnerable.
- Be well armed when walking alone. This does not mean carrying a gun. An umbrella, cane, spray gun or pepper canister can be good weapons. Keep a whistle on you and make a lot of noise. Attackers do not want attention on them. Remember you just have to immobilise your attacker until help comes or you can get away.
- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Stay in well lighted areas as much as possible.
- Walk confidently, directly at a steady pace.
- Walk on the side of the street facing traffic.
- Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes and alleys where rapists can hide.
- If you think you are being followed, walk quickly to areas where there are people and lights. If a car appears to be following you, turn and walk in the opposite direction or walk on the other side of the street.
- Be careful when people stop you for directions or money. Always reply from a distance and never get too close to the car.
- If you are in trouble or feel you are in danger, don't be afraid to attract help in any way that you can. Scream, yell or run to safety.
- If you choose to carry any type of weapon for self protection, give careful consideration to your ability and willingness to use it. Remember there is always the chance that it could be taken away and used against you.
- Security gates act as obstacles for criminals. Ensure your security gates are quality products, providing you the level of security and peace of mind that you need.
- Always react on your sixth sense. If you feel that you are being followed, you probably are. Never drive home in a situation like this. Hoot or flash your lights to dissuade any would-be pursuer. Drive to a busy area or a police station.
- Never pick up hitchhikers and do not stop to help if you see a broken down vehicle or someone at the side of the road. Instead drive to a phone and report it to the police.
- Always be alert at robots and stop streets. Never drive right up to a car in front of you. Always leave space in case you need to manoeuvre out.
- At home, keep all doors and windows closed. This applies even if you live in a block of flats as criminals climb balconies.
- Never allow people you do not know into your home. If they say they are from a company, let them wait outside while you look up the name in a telephone book and phone and ask the reason for the person being in your home.
- Do not hitchhike or accept lifts from strangers.
- If you use public toilets, keep the cubicle locked.
- If you feel the attacker is dangerous and that you should cooperate, do so. If you feel you may be able to negotiate with the rapist, either talking him into using a condom or abandoning the rape altogether, do so.

- Self defence classes may help as they will make you more aware of what is going on around you, and make you more physically assertive and aware of a defensive stance.
- Do not consume refreshments prepared by strangers or not prepared in your presence as these may be laced with date rape drugs – even trace amounts of these drugs render you helpless.
- Don't leave a social event with someone you have just met or do not know well.

HOW TO PREVENT RAPE...

...AT HOME

- Invest in good locks, and remember: the best lock cannot function if you fail to lock it. Keep your doors locked.
- A door viewer will allow you to observe without opening the door.
- Sliding doors should be secured with an auxiliary lock, or install security gates.
- All entrances and garages should be well lighted. Leave a light on in the house when you go out at night so that when you re-enter, you do not have to enter a dark house. Inside and outside lights give you a good deal of protection.
- Trim bushes and shrubbery so no one can hide in them, particularly when they are close to doors and windows.
- Never open the door after a knock. Ask the person to give their name. In the case of service persons ask for proper I.D. and refuse entrance if you feel uneasy. Use the door viewer to see who it is and keep the door on a latch.
- Never hide a key over a door frame or in a flower pot or in a post box.
- Don't advertise that you are home alone. Never reveal to a telephone caller or someone at the door that you're alone.
- Warn family members, especially children, not to give information by phone about who is at home, who is out, how long anyone is expected to be out.
- Never open the door automatically whenever the bell rings or someone knocks.
- A shrill blast from a whistle into the telephone will discourage most obscene calls. The best advice is to hang up immediately.
- Avoid using a Laundromat in an apartment complex by yourself, especially at night. Team up with a neighbour or friend.
- If a door or window has been forced or broken while you were absent, do not enter. Someone may still be inside. Use the neighbour's telephone to call the police and wait outside till they arrive.

...WHILE WALKING

- Do not dress skimpily before leaving home.
- Avoid walking alone as much as possible. Your best defence is having other people nearby or walking with a pet.
- If you walk alone, plan your route carefully. Notice stores or restaurants that are open should you need to ask for help.
- Have your keys ready when you approach your car / home and enter immediately.

...IN YOUR CAR

- Park in a well lighted area and always lock your car.
- If you work late, don't go to your car alone if you can avoid it. Ask somebody to escort you to your car.
- Before getting in, check front and back seats for intruders.
- Make sure that have enough fuel for your entire trip before you start.
- Keep your doors locked and windows raised so that a person cannot reach in and unlock a door when you stop your car.
- Keep your car in gear while halted at traffic lights and stop signs. If someone tries to get in, drive off. Don't worry about hurting the person.
- Never pick up hitchhikers of either sex.
- Keep windows and doors locked, always.
- Always check your rear-view mirror, and if you think you are being followed, drive to a police station.
- When approaching your home slow down, put lights on bright, and scan the street. Ensure you have a well lit drive way and entrance. If you see anyone or anything that makes you anxious, drive around the block or

phone the police or the armed response company to which you subscribe. Never stop or get out of your car if you have noticed something strange.

- When parking at night, select a place that will be well-lit when returning to the car.
- Always make sure the car is locked, and have the keys ready when returning to the car - do not have them openly displayed or dangling from your hands. Don't have the keys buried in your handbag and stand outside scrabbling for your keys in your handbag.

IF ATTACKED...

What kind of resistance can and should a woman use against a rapist? The best resistance you can use against an attacker is your common sense; your brain is your most powerful weapon. The most important thing to remember is that you must not fight the attacker, but try to divert the person long enough to get away. Always look for a means to escape. If the attacker has a weapon, use your common sense. Fighting against it could be dangerous and will probably get you killed.

THINK... DO NOT PANIC

- Evaluate the situation. Can you escape? Is anyone near?
- We recommend you evaluate first and if an opportunity arises to escape, by whatever means, then use it.
- It is not recommended that you physically resist your attacker unless the use of force at that moment would lead to your escape. Evaluate the situation.
- If instinct should force you to resist, don't hold back. You must try to hurt him. Press your thumbs into your attacker's eyes. A knee (not foot) in the groin is quite effective and the attacker won't be able to run to catch you afterwards. Your resistance should be disabling.
- Do not insult, threaten or provoke an assailant.
- Always be alert to where you are - if you are apprehensive about a situation, it is best to move to a more public (lighted) place.
- If you own a firearm, learn how to handle it proficiently.

REMEMBER:

- Do not do anything that may upset the attacker, do not insult him / them, spit at them, curse at them, criticise
- Try to convince the person to put the weapon down.
- With your long fingernails, try to extract skin from the attacker to be used as DNA evidence if the rapist is apprehended after your attack or even repeat offences.
- Make the attacker see you as an individual, not as an object. If the attacker is unarmed, you may be able to scare, distract or injure the person enough to make your escape.
- Don't be stupid - no-one should tell people that are being hijacked to fight for possession of the gun or the car - a rape is more intimate and dangerous - please don't risk your life. If the rape attack takes place within his vehicle, notice the car interior, what kind of car it is, does it have a floor gear lever (clutch), an automatic, is it a two or four door, sedan or hatchback, bucket or bench seats, radio, etc.?
- Make noise - chances are that someone will notice and assist you to fight off the offender or notify the authorities. If possible, use a whistle, scream, shout and try to get away. If you're in a public place, scream "HELP", "RAPE", "POLICE", or create a disturbance that will attract attention.
- Fight back if you can do so safely - never try fighting indoors only in a public place where other people may hear your screams.
- Try to leave your fingerprints everywhere you can. Try to leave some small personal items such as a button, ear-ring, lipstick anything which can be traced to you.
- Break away if you can, and run toward areas with people.
- Be observant so that you will be able to remember and identify the assailant, but don't let him or them see you are studying them and remember their clothes are less important than noticing physical characteristics - a tattoo, a scar, skin tone, accent, limp, height, hair colour, speech impediment, the slant of their eyes... does the rapist smoke, what colour is the interior, any loose items on the seats and what are they?
- Report the incident to the police as soon as possible. If you don't want to report to the police at least phone Crime Stop where you can make an anonymous report - protect the next woman he will try to rape. If you are raped get to a hospital, doctor or clinic as fast as possible to get onto anti-retrovirals to stop HIV - you have to get onto these within 72 hours of the rape, the faster you get onto the drugs the better your chances of not contracting the virus or any other STD for that matter.

CONTACTING THE POLICE

- Report the incident immediately to the police and to your nearest medical practitioner. Do not bathe after the attack – please wait for authorities to conduct a rape kit.
- Seek proper counselling immediately, the solution unfortunately is not immediate, and the hardest part is to rebuild your esteem.
- Even if you thwart off the attack or if you wish to remain anonymous after your attack, please report the incident to your police station or Crime Stop to prevent recurrence of an attack.

EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

- Flying Squad: 10111, Emergency Services:
- South African Police Services Honeydew
- Visit <http://www.rapecrisis.org.za> or <http://www.speakout.org.za> for rape prevention strategies and support forums for victims

SA Police Service Honeydew	
Ops Room:	011 795-1960 / 1969
Station Switchboard:	011 801-8400
Trauma Unit:	082 448-9337
CPF Office	011 801-8406

SUPPORT YOUR POLICE FORUM IN FIGHTING CRIME AND RAPE IN OUR AREA

