

Safety Tips for Seniors

Senior Safety Begins at Home

- Install and use good locks on doors and windows.
- Don't hide keys under the doormat, in the mailbox or in a planter. Leave an extra set with a neighbor.
- When service or delivery people come to your door, ask for ID, and check with their company if you're still not sure.
- Make sure the street number on your house is large, well-lighted and unobstructed so emergency personnel can find your home quickly.
- If you decide to install an alarm system, consider one that is monitored for burglary, fire and medical emergencies.



Stay Safe When You Go Out

- Go out with family or friends rather than by yourself.
- Hold your purse close or keep your wallet in an inside front pocket.
- Don't carry large amounts of cash or unneeded credit cards.
- Use a direct deposit service for Social Security and other regular checks.
- Keep car doors locked, be watchful in parking lots and garages, and try to park in well-lighted spots near entrances.
- Sit near the driver or the exit when riding on a bus, train or subway.
- If a person or situation makes you nervous, get away.

Don't Fall for Con Artists' Tricks

- If it sounds too good to be true — free vacation, miracle cure, sure-fire investment — avoid it.
- It is illegal for telemarketers to ask for credit card, Social Security, phone card or bank account numbers to verify prizes, so if anyone asks, don't give it to them.
- If someone tries to rush you into signing an insurance policy, sales contract or anything else, be suspicious. Read it carefully and have a trusted friend check it, too.
- Some con artists pose as representatives of companies or government agencies that, for a fee, recover money lost to fraudulent telemarketers. Don't fall for this trick.
- When in doubt, check it out by calling the police, the Better Business Bureau, the local consumer protection office, or the National Consumers League Fraud Information Center at 800-876-7060.

Things You Can Do in Your Community

- Report any crimes or suspicious activities to police.
- Join a Neighborhood Watch program to help protect your community.
- Get involved in activities that can make your community a better place, like mentoring children, serving as a volunteer aide for the police or fire department, or escorting disabled persons.

At Home

- Never open your door automatically. Install and use a peephole.
- Lock your doors and windows.
- Vary your daily routine.
- Use "Neighbor Watch" to keep an eye on your neighborhood.
- Don't leave notes on the door when going out.
- Leave lights on when going out at night; use a timer to turn lights on and off when you are away for an extended period.
- Notify neighbors and the police when going away on a trip.
- When you are away remember to cancel deliveries such as newspapers and arrange for someone - a neighbor's child, perhaps - to mow the lawn if need be. Arrange for your mail to be held by the Post Office, or ask a neighbor to collect it for you.
- Be wary of unsolicited offers to make repairs to your home. Deal only with reputable businesses.
- Keep an inventory with serial numbers and photographs of re-saleable appliances, antiques and furniture. Leave copies in a safe place.
- Don't hesitate to report crime or suspicious activities.
- Install deadbolt locks on all your doors.
- Keep your home well lit at night, inside and out; keep curtains closed.
- Ask for proper identification from delivery persons or strangers.
- If a stranger asks to use your telephone, offer to place the call for him or her yourself.
- Never let a stranger into your home.
- Do not leave notes on your door when you are gone.
- Do not hide your keys under the mat or in other conspicuous places.
- Never give out information over the phone indicating you are alone or that you won't be home at a certain time.
- If you arrive at home and suspect a stranger may be inside, DON'T GO IN. Leave quietly and call 911 to report the crime.

Walking

- If you are attacked on the street, make as much noise as possible by calling for help or blowing a whistle. Do not pursue your attacker. Call 911 and report the crime as soon as possible.
- Avoid walking alone at night. Try to have a friend accompany you in high risk areas . . . even during the daytime.
- Avoid carrying weapons . . . they may be used against you.
- Always plan your route and stay alert to your surroundings. Walk confidently.
- Have a companion accompany you.
- Stay away from buildings and doorways; walk in well-lighted areas.
- Have your key ready when approaching your front door.
- Don't dangle your purse away from your body. (Twelve percent of all crimes against the elderly are purse snatchings and street robberies.)
- Don't carry large, bulky shoulder bags; carry only what you need. Better yet, sew a small pocket inside your jacket or coat. If you don't have a purse, no one will try to snatch it.

Shopping

- Carry your purse very close to you . . . don't dangle it from your arm. Never leave your purse in a shopping cart. Never leave your purse unattended.
- Don't carry any more cash than is necessary. Many grocery stores now accept checks and automatic teller cards instead of cash.
- Don't display large sums of cash.

In Your Car

- Always keep your car doors locked, whether you are in or out of your car. Keep your gas tank full and your engine properly maintained to avoid breakdowns.
- If your car breaks down, pull over to the right as far as possible, raise the hood, and wait **INSIDE** the car for help. Avoid getting out of the car and making yourself a target before police arrive.
- At stop signs and traffic lights, keep the car in gear.
- Travel well-lit and busy streets. Plan your route.
- Don't leave your purse on the seat beside you; put it on the floor, where it is more difficult for someone to grab it.
- Lock bundles or bags in the trunk. If interesting packages are out of sight, a thief will be less tempted to break in to steal them.
- When returning to your car, check the front and back seat before entering.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.

Banking

- Many criminals know exactly when government checks arrive each month, and may pick that day to attack. Avoid this by using Direct Deposit, which sends your money directly from the government to the bank of your choice. And, at many banks, free checking accounts are available to senior citizens. Your bank has all the information.
- Never withdraw money from your bank accounts for anyone except **YOURSELF**. Be wary of con artists and get-rich schemes that probably are too-good-to-be-true.
- You should store valuables in a Safe Deposit Box.
- Never give your money to someone who calls on you, identifying himself as a bank official. A bank will never ask you to remove your money.
- If you have been swindled or conned, report the crime to your local police or Prosecuting Attorney's office.