

SAFETY FOR SENIORS

As people grow older, their chance of being victims of crime decreases dramatically. But a lifetime of experiences coupled with the physical problems associated with aging often make older Americans fearful. Though they're on the lookout constantly for physical attack and burglary, they're not as alert to frauds and con games - in reality the greatest crime threat to seniors' well being and trust.

Crime prevention is everyone's responsibility, not just a job for your local police department. Seniors can learn how to protect themselves from crime by following simple, common-sense suggestions. Share these tips with your neighbors and friends. Make it tough for criminals to work in your neighborhood.

Want to conquer fear and prevent crime?

PRECAUTIONS

- Be alert when out and about
- Go with friends or family, not alone. Avoid walking alone at night. Have a friend accompany you in high risk areas, even during the daytime.
- Carry your purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.
- Never leave your purse in a shopping cart.
- Don't carry credit cards you don't need or large amounts of cash.
- Use direct deposit for Social Security and other regular checks.
- Whether you're a passenger or driver, keep car doors locked.
- Be particularly alert in parking lots and garages. Park near an entrance.
- Sit close to the driver or near the exit while riding the bus, train, or subway.
- If someone or something makes you uneasy, trust your instincts and leave.

IN YOUR CAR....

- Keep your gas tank full and your engine properly maintained to avoid breakdowns.
- Always lock your car doors, even when you are inside and keep your windows rolled up. Driving with the windows closed also improves gas mileage.
- Lock packages and valuables in the trunk. Do not leave them on the back seat or on the floor of the car where potential thieves can see them.
- When you return to your car, always check the front and back seats before you get in.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- If your car breaks down, pull over to the right as far as possible, raise the hood and wait inside the car for help. Do not get out of the car or roll down the windows until the police arrive.

PROTECTING YOUR HOME...

- Make your home safe and secure. Always keep your doors and windows locked. Install dead-bolt locks on all your doors and good locks on your windows and use them!
- Don't hide keys in mailboxes and planters or under doormats. Instead, leave an extra set of keys with a neighbor or friend.
- Don't leave notes on your door when you are gone.
- Never give out information on the telephone indicating that you are alone or that you won't be home at a certain time.
- Keep your home well lit at night and keep your curtains closed at night.
- Install a peephole in your front door so you can see callers without opening the door.
- Ask for photo identification from service or delivery people before letting them in. Don't be afraid to ask. If they are legitimate, they won't mind. If you are the least bit worried, call the company to verify.
- 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.
- Be sure your street address number is large, clear of obstruction, and well-lighted so police and other emergency personnel can find your home quickly.
- Consider a home alarm system that provides monitoring for burglary, fire, and medical emergencies.
- When you are gone for more than a day, make sure your home looks and sounds occupied- use automatic timers to turn on lights and a radio or television.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT FRAUDS AND CONS.

- Watch out for con artists
- Don't fall for anything that sounds too good to be true - a free vacation, sweepstakes prizes, cures for cancer and arthritis, a low-risk, high-yield investment scheme.
- Never give your credit card, telephone card, Social Security, or bank account number to anyone over the phone. It's illegal for telemarketers to ask for these numbers to verify a prize or gift.
- Don't let anyone rush you into signing anything - an insurance policy, a sales agreement, a contract. Read it carefully and have someone you trust check it over.
- Beware of individuals claiming to represent companies, consumer organizations, or government agencies that offer to recover lost money from fraudulent telemarketers for a fee.
- Never withdraw money from your bank accounts for anyone except yourself. If you receive a telephone call from someone claiming to be a relative or friend in immediate need of money, for example to get out of jail in a foreign country, verify that information and the identity of the caller before sending any money.
- If you're suspicious, check it out with the police, the [Better Business Bureau](#), or local consumer protection office. Call the [National Consumers League Fraud Information Center](#) at 800-876-7060.
- If you have been swindled or conned, do not be ashamed or embarrassed. Report the crime to the police department. Con artists count on victims' reluctance to admit they have been conned or swindled, but if you delay, you help them get away with the crime. Remember, if you never report the crime, the con artist remains free to cheat others again and again and you have no chance of ever possibly getting your money back.

IF YOU BECOME A VICTIM OF A CRIME...

- If you arrive at home and suspect a stranger may be inside, DO NOT GO INSIDE. Leave quietly and call 911.
- If you are attacked on the street, make as much noise as possible by calling for help or blowing a whistle. Do not pursue the attacker. Be a good witness. Try to recall as much detail about the attacker's physical description and/or a vehicle as possible and call 911 immediately.

Find out more about neighborhood action.

- Get involved in the community
- Report any crime or suspicious activities to law enforcement.
- Form a neighborhood watch to look out for each other and help the police.
- Work to change conditions that hurt your neighborhood.

This information is provided through the resources of the Los Angeles Police Department and the Crime and Violence Prevention Center of the Office of the Attorney General for the State of California.