



Ways to Reduce your Risk of Sexual Assault

Avoiding Dangerous Situations

While you can never completely protect yourself from sexual assault, there are some things you can do to help reduce your risk of being assaulted.

Safety Planning

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted or is in an abusive relationship, there are things to consider when thinking about safety.

How can I protect my child from sexual assault?

While there is no sure-fire way to protect your child from all dangers, there are some steps that you can take to help reduce the risk of a sexual assault.

In a Social Situation

Here are some tips to help reduce your risk of being assaulted in social situations.

If Someone is Pressuring You

If someone is pressuring you, it is important to remember that being in this situation is *not* your fault...here are some things that you can try.

What can Men Do?

The majority of those who commit sexual assaults are men. Even so, it is important to remember that the vast majority of men are not rapists.

Computer Safety

These are some valuable ways to manage your personal information online, as well as tips for following safe browsing procedures.

Avoiding Dangerous Situations

While you can never completely protect yourself from sexual assault, there are some things you can do to help reduce your risk of being assaulted.

- **Be aware** of your surroundings. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way to get out of a bad situation.
- Try to **avoid isolated areas**. It is more difficult to get help if no one is around.
- **Walk with purpose**. Even if you don't know where you are going, act like you do.
- **Trust your instincts**. If a situation or location feels unsafe or uncomfortable, it probably isn't the best place to be.
- **Try not to load yourself down** with packages or bags as this can make you appear more vulnerable.
- **Make sure your cell phone is with you** and charged and that you have cab money.
- **Don't allow yourself to be isolated** with someone you don't trust or someone you don't know.
- **Avoid putting music headphones in both ears** so that you can be more aware of your surroundings, especially if you are walking alone.

What should I do if I am sexually assaulted?

Sexual assault is a crime of motive and opportunity. Ultimately, there is no surefire way to prevent an attack. If you or someone you know has been affected by sexual violence, it's not your fault. You are not alone. Help is available 24/7 through the National Sexual Assault Hotlines at 1-800.656.HOPE, and online at rainn.org

Safety Planning

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted or is in an abusive relationship, there are things to consider when thinking about safety. It may be helpful to create a safety plan or to think about some ways to stay and feel safer. Depending on where you live, there may be unique circumstances to think about. The following information is divided up into rural, suburban and urban, and college campus safety tips. There is a lot of overlap but there are also things that are unique to each location. Please review the one that is closest to your situation.

Safety Planning in Rural Communities

In rural communities, there are fewer services that provide support for victims of sexual assault and dating and domestic violence. It can also be a challenge to maintain privacy due to the small community size.

Things to plan:

How to get away if there is an emergency

- Be conscious of exits or other escape routes
- Think about options for transportation (car, bus, train, etc.)

Who can help

- Friends, family
- Support centers, if there are any in your area
- National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE(4673), the [National Sexual Assault Online Hotline](http://www.nationalsexualassaulthotline.org) or, if you are in a dating or domestic violence situation, the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1.800.799.SAFE(7233)

Where to go

- Friend's house
- Relative's house
- A domestic violence or homeless shelter (if there are not any domestic violence shelters in your area, and you are contemplating leaving the town, you may want to consider going to a homeless shelter)
- The police (even if the police know both you and the perpetrator—they are still responsible for doing their job).
- **Important:** If the dangerous situation involves a partner, go to the police or a shelter first.

What to bring:

- Important papers and documents: birth certificate, social security card, license, passport, medical records, lease, bills, etc.
- House keys, car keys, cash, credit cards, medicine, important numbers, cell phone
- If you are bringing children with you, remember to bring their important papers and legal documents
- Keep all of these things in an emergency bag
- Hide the bag—best if not in house or car
- If the bag is discovered, can call it a “hurricane”, “tornado” or “fire” bag

How to anticipate and respond to a perpetrator's actions

- Be conscious of places the perpetrator frequents (work schedule, favorite places to go, etc.)
- Plan what you would say and do if you came into contact with him or her

Traveling Safety:

If you need to get away and there is no public transportation in your area, try to find someone who will allow you to use his or her car if you do not have one at your disposal.

Driving

- Keep your doors locked
- Have extra car necessities (oil, jumper cables, etc.)
- Try not to wait until the last minute to fill your gas tank; always keep it half-way full if you can
- Have your keys ready when you go to unlock your car
- Plan your route and know what "safe" places are on it (police stations, hospitals, etc.)

Home Safety:

- Change the locks on doors and windows
- Keep your doors locked, even when you are at home
- Install a security system
- Install outside lighting system (with motion detectors)
- Do not prop doors
- Close blinds/curtains at night
- Keep car doors locked, even in your own driveway

Tips to Remember

- Keep cash with you at all times
- Keep some change accessible just in case you need to use a pay phone
- Memorize all important numbers/have important numbers easily accessible on your cell phone (if you have one)
- Establish a code word so that family, friends, etc. know when to call for help
- Have a backup plan in case the first fails
- Carry a small noisemaker (like a whistle) and/or flashlight on your keychain
- Be aware of your routine and try to alter it sometimes, if possible
- Have an extra copy of keys
- Try to keep in contact with people/organizations who are helping you

Safety Planning in Urban or Suburban Areas

Things to plan:

How to get away if there is an emergency

- Be conscious of exits or other escape routes
- Think about options for transportation (car, bus, subway, etc.)

Who can help

- Friends, family
- Support centers if there are any in your area
- National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE(4673), the National Sexual Assault Online Hotline(LINK TO: /ohl-bridge.php) or, if you are in a dating or domestic violence situation, the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1.800.799.SAFE(7233)

Where to go

- Friend's house
- Relative's house
- A domestic violence or homeless shelter (if there are not any domestic violence shelters in your area, and you are contemplating leaving the town, you may want to consider going to a homeless shelter)
- The police
- **Important Safety Note:** If the dangerous situation involves a partner, go to the police or a shelter first.

What to bring

- Important papers and documents: birth certificate, social security card, license, passport, medical records, lease, bills, etc.
- House keys, car keys, cash, credit cards, medicine, important numbers, cell phone
- If you are bringing children with you, remember to bring their important papers and legal documents
- Keep all of these things in an emergency bag
- Hide the bag—best if not in house or car
- If the bag is discovered, can call it a “hurricane”, “tornado” or “fire” bag

How to anticipate and respond to a perpetrator's actions

- Be conscious of places the perpetrator frequents (work schedule, favorite places to go, etc.)
- Plan what you would say and do if you came into contact with him or her

Traveling Safety:

Walking

- Make sure your cell phone (if you have one) is easily accessible
- Keep some change accessible just in case you need to use a pay phone
- Take major, public streets and paths rather than less populated shortcuts
- Avoid dimly lit places and talk to authorities if lights need to be installed in an area
- Avoid walking alone whenever possible
- Carry a small noisemaker (like a whistle) and/or flashlight on your keychain
- Remain mentally alert and aware of your surroundings
- Plan your route and know what “safe” places are on it (police stations, hospitals, etc.)

Driving

- Keep your doors locked
- Have extra car necessities (oil, jumper cables, etc.)
- Try not to wait until the last minute to fill your gas tank; always keep it at least half full if you can
- Have your keys ready when you go to unlock your car
- Plan your route and know what “safe” places are on it (police stations, hospitals, etc.)

Taking the bus or subway

- Be alert at bus or subway stops when waiting for them to arrive
- Use the bus or subway schedule to avoid waiting for a long time at a stop
- Plan your route to use the busiest, best-lighted stop possible
- If someone is bothering you on the bus or subway, tell the driver or use the emergency signal
- If you feel uneasy about getting off at your usual stop, stay on until the next stop or wait until the safest stop

Home Safety:

- Change the locks on doors and windows
- Keep house doors locked, even when you are at home
- Install a security system
- Install outside lighting system (with motion detectors)
- Do not prop doors or windows
- Close blinds/curtains at night
- Keep car doors locked, even in your own driveway or garage

Tips to Remember

- Keep change/cash with you at all times
- Memorize all important numbers/have important numbers easily accessible on your cell phone (if you have one)
- Establish a code word so that family, friends, etc. know when to call for help
- Have a backup plan in case the first fails
- Be aware of your daily routine and try to alter it sometimes, if possible
- Keep in contact with people/organizations who are helping you
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable or threatened, leave the situation and go to a safe place

Safety Planning on a College Campus

Things to plan:

How to get away if there is an emergency

- Be conscious of exits or other escape routes
- Think about options for transportation (car, bus, train, etc.)

Who can help

- Friends, family
- Support centers if there are any in your area
- Campus safety or local police
- National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE(4673), the [National Sexual Assault Online Hotline](#), or if you are in a dating or domestic violence, situation the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1.800.799.SAFE(7233)

Where to go

- Friend's dorm room or apartment
- Relative's house
- A domestic violence or homeless shelter (if there are not any domestic violence shelters in your area, and you are contemplating leaving the town, you may want to consider going to a homeless shelter)
- The police or campus safety (even if campus safety knows both you and the perpetrator—they are still responsible for doing their jobs)
- **Important Safety Note:** If the dangerous situation involves a partner go to the police or a shelter first.

What to bring

- Important papers and documents: birth certificate, social security card, license, passport, medical records, bills, important numbers, cell phone, etc.
- House or dorm room keys, car keys, cash, credit cards, medicine,
- Keep all of these things in an emergency bag
- Hide the bag—best if not in house or car
- If the bag is discovered, can call it a “hurricane,” “tornado” or “fire” bag

At parties

- Be aware of rape drugs
- Try not to leave your drink unattended
- Only drink from un-opened containers or from drinks you have watched being made and poured
- Avoid group drinks like punch bowls
- Cover your drink. It is easy to slip in a small pill even while you are holding your drink. Hold a cup with your hand over the top, or choose drinks that are contained in a bottle and keep your thumb over the nozzle
- If you feel extremely tired or drunk for no apparent reason, you may have been drugged. Find your friends and ask them to leave with you as soon as possible
- If you suspect you have been drugged, go to a hospital and ask to be tested
- Keep track of how many drinks you have had
- Try to come and leave with a group of people you trust
- Avoid giving out your personal information (phone number, where you live, etc.). If someone asks for your number, take his/her number instead of giving out yours

Traveling around campus:

Walking

- Make sure your cell phone is easily accessible and fully charged
- Be familiar with where emergency phones are installed on the campus
- Be aware of open buildings where you can use a phone
- Keep some change accessible just in case you need to use a pay phone
- Take major, public paths rather than less populated shortcuts
- Avoid dimly lit places and talk to campus services if lights need to be installed in an area
- Avoid putting music headphones in both ears so that you can be more aware of your surroundings, especially if you are walking alone.
- Walking back from the library very late at night is sometimes unavoidable, so try to walk with a friend
- Carry a noisemaker (like a whistle) on your keychain
- Carry a small flashlight on your keychain
- If walking feels unsafe, try calling campus security. Many campuses offer safe ride programs

Driving

- Keep your doors locked
- Have extra car necessities (oil, jumper cables, etc.)
- Try not to wait until the last minute to fill your gas tank; always keep it at least half full if you can
- Have your keys ready when you go to unlock your car

Taking the bus

- Be alert at bus stops when waiting for the bus to arrive
- Use the bus schedule to avoid waiting for a long time at a stop
- Plan your route to use the busiest, best-lighted stop possible
- If someone is bothering you on the bus, tell the driver
- If you feel uneasy about getting off at your usual stop, stay on the bus until the next stop or wait until the bus goes around to your usual stop the second time

Dorm safety:

- Lock your door when you go to sleep and when you are not in the room
- Keep your window locked (especially if it is easy to enter from the ground)
- If people constantly prop open the main dorm door, talk to an authority about it
- If your dorm has an elevator, try to stay near the button dashboard when are you riding in it so that you have easy access to the emergency button. Also, if you feel threatened, you can push the button for the next floor and leave immediately instead of waiting for the elevator to reach the floor where you live
- Avoid isolated areas (stairways, laundry rooms, basement, etc.) when you are alone

Reduce your risk in a social situation

While you can never completely protect yourself from sexual assault, there are some things you can do to help reduce your risk of being assaulted in social situations.

1. **When you go to a social gathering, go with a group of friends.** Arrive together, check in with each other throughout the evening, and leave together. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way out of a bad situation.
2. **Trust your instincts.** If you feel unsafe in any situation, go with your gut. If you see something suspicious, contact law enforcement immediately (local authorities can be reached by calling 911 in most areas of the U.S.).
3. **Don't leave your drink unattended** while talking, dancing, using the restroom, or making a phone call. If you've left your drink alone, just get a new one.
4. **Don't accept drinks from people you don't know or trust.** If you choose to accept a drink, go with the person to the bar to order it, watch it being poured, and carry it yourself. At parties, don't drink from the punch bowls or other large, common open containers.
5. **Watch out for your friends, and vice versa.** If a friend seems out of it, is way too intoxicated for the amount of alcohol they've had, or is acting out of character, get him or her to a safe place immediately.
6. **If you suspect you or a friend has been drugged, contact law enforcement immediately (local authorities can be reached by calling 911 in most areas of the U.S.).** Be explicit with doctors so they can give you the correct tests (you will need a urine test and possibly others).

What should I do if I am sexually assaulted?

Sexual assault is a crime of motive and opportunity. Ultimately, there is no surefire way to prevent an attack. If you or someone you know has been affected by sexual violence, it's not your fault. You are not alone. Help is available 24/7 through the National Sexual Assault Hotlines at 1-800.656.HOPE, and online at rainn.org

If you have been sexually assaulted there are some additional steps you can take to help feel safer:

How to anticipate and respond to perpetrator's actions

- Be conscious of places the perpetrator frequents (work schedule, class schedule, where s/he likes to eat, what club meetings s/he has, what sports practices s/he has, etc.)
- Know which people the perpetrator usually hangs out with and what social events s/he likes to attend
- Plan what you would say and do if you came into contact with him or her

General tips

- Use the resources that your campus offers (sexual assault services, psychological services, health services, campus police force, escort service, etc.)
- If you are concerned about anonymity, use any resources that the neighboring community provides
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable or threatened, leave the situation and go to a safe place

Finally...Remember: it is not your fault.



Get Help

Seek help via the National Sexual Assault Hotlines.



Donate Now

Make an online donation to RAINN.



Get Information

Learn more about sexual assault.

National Sexual Assault Hotline | 1.800.656.HOPE(4673) | Free. Confidential. 24/7.

Reference: Seattle University Campus Public Safety. CPS Handbook.

How Can I Protect My Child From Sexual Assault?

Parents are surrounded by messages about child sexual abuse. Talk shows and TV news warn parents about dangers at school, in the home and on the Internet. Despite all the media coverage, parents don't get much advice about how to talk to their children about sexual abuse and how to prevent it.

Talk to your children about sexuality and sexual abuse in age-appropriate terms.

- Talking openly and directly about sexuality teaches children that it is okay to talk to you when they have questions.
- Teach children the names of their body parts so that they have the language to ask questions and express concerns about those body parts.
- Teach children that some parts of their body are private.
- Let children know that other people should not be touching or looking at their private parts unless they need to touch them to provide care. If someone does need to touch them in those private areas, a parent of trusted caregiver should be there, too.
- Tell children that if someone tries to touch those private areas or wants to look at them, OR if someone tries to show the child their own private parts, they should tell a trusted adult as soon as possible.
- All children should be told that it's okay to say "no" to touches that make them uncomfortable or if someone is touching them in ways that make them uncomfortable and that they should tell a trusted adult as soon as possible.
- This can lead to some slightly embarrassing situations, such as a child who then says they don't want give a relative a hug or kiss! Work with your child to find ways to greet people that don't involve uncomfortable kinds of touch.
- Talking openly about sexuality and sexual abuse also teaches children that these things don't need to be "secret." Abusers will sometimes tell a child that the abuse is a secret. Let your children know that if someone is touching them or talking to them in ways that make them uncomfortable that it shouldn't stay a secret.
- Make sure to tell your child that that they will not get into trouble if they tell you this kind of secret.
- Don't try to put all this information into one big "talk" about sex.
- Talking about sexuality and sexual abuse should be routine conversations.

Be involved in your child's life.

- Be interested in your child's activities.
- Ask your child about the people they go to school with or play with.
- If your child is involved in sports, go to games and practices. Get to know the other parents and coaches.
- If your child is involved in afterschool activities or daycare, ask them what they did during the day.
- Talk about the media.
- If your child watches a lot of television or plays video games, watch or play with them.
- Many TV shows (for example, CSI or Law and Order) show sexual violence of different kinds.
- Some video games (for example, Grand Theft Auto) allow the user to engage in sexual violence.
- Use examples from TV or games that you have watched or played together to start up conversations about sexuality and sexual abuse.
- Know the other adults that your child might talk to.
- Children sometimes feel that they cannot talk to their parents.
- Know the other trusted adults in your child's life.

Be available.

- Make time to spend with your child.
- Let your child know that they can come to you if they have questions or if someone is talking to them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Be sure to follow up on this! If your child comes to you with concerns or questions, make time to talk to them.

When you empower your child to say "no" to unwanted touch and teach them that they can come to you with questions and concerns, you take critical steps to preventing child sexual abuse.

What Can Men Do?

While individuals of both genders are perpetrators of sexual assault, the majority of those who commit sexual assaults are men. Even so, it is important to remember that the vast majority of men are not rapists. There are many things men (and women) can do to help prevent sexual violence.

If you see someone in danger of being assaulted:

- Step in and offer assistance. Ask if the person needs help. NOTE: Before stepping in, make sure to evaluate the risk. If it means putting yourself in danger, call 911 instead.
- Don't leave. If you remain at the scene and are a witness, the perpetrator is less likely to do anything.
- If you know the perpetrator, tell him or her that you do not approve of what s/he is doing. Ask him or her to leave the potential victim alone.

Be an ally:

- When you go to a party, go with a group of friends. Arrive together, check in with each other frequently and leave together.
- Have a buddy system. Don't be afraid to let a friend know if you are worried about her/his safety.
- If you see someone who is intoxicated, offer to call him or her a cab.

If someone you know has been assaulted:

- Listen. Be there. Don't be judgmental.
- Be patient. Remember, it will take your friend some time to deal with the crime.
- Help to empower your friend or family member. Sexual assault is a crime that takes away an individual's power, it is important not to compound this experience by putting pressure on your friend or family member to do things that he or she is not ready to do yet.
- Encourage your friend to report the rape to law enforcement (call 911 in most areas). If your friend has questions about the criminal justice process, talking with someone on the National Sexual Assault Hotline, 1-800-656-HOPE can help.
- Let your friend know that professional help is available through the National Sexual Assault Hotline, 1-800-656-HOPE and the National Sexual Assault [Online Hotline](#).
- If your friend is willing to seek medical attention or report the assault, offer to accompany them wherever they need to go (hospital, police station, campus security, etc.)
- Encourage him or her to contact one of the hotlines, but realize that only your friend can make the decision to get help.

Changing the culture:

There are certain things in our culture that make sexual assault more possible. By speaking out and educating ourselves and others, we can help to decrease the number of sexual assaults.

- Become knowledgeable about the issue and share your knowledge with others.
- Volunteer for RAINN or your local rape crisis center and help educate your community about preventing sexual violence.=