



Columbia Police
Department

Sexual Assault



If you are attacked ...

Remember, your main concern must always be YOUR SAFETY. No one can tell you whether you should fight back, submit or resist. **It depends on you and the situation.**

Keep assessing the situation as it is happening. If one strategy doesn't work, try another. Possible options are: negotiating, stalling for time, distracting the assailant and fleeing to a safe place, verbal assertiveness, screaming to attract attention, or physical resistance. Your best defense, however, is to **be prepared** — know your options ahead of time. Your safety may depend upon your ability to stay cool and calm.

If you are a victim of rape ...

- Go to a safe place immediately and call the police, sheriff, a rape crisis center, doctor, friend or relative. The sooner you make the report, the greater the chances the attacker will be caught.
- Do not wash, douche, change clothes or clean up in any way until after talking to the police and going to the hospital. You could destroy valuable evidence for court use.
- Remember, you are the victim. You have nothing to feel guilty or ashamed about. You may want to contact a treatment or crisis center to help you deal with the consequences of the

AVOID

It's not fair, but it's a fact - children and women must avoid some situations in order to reduce the risks of sexual assault.

Learn to be observant so that you will be able to describe a criminal should you witness or be a victim of a crime. Practice this by describing people you pass on the street, or identifying car makes and models.

Don't be afraid to be afraid, trust your senses. If a situation makes you feel uncomfortable, it may be dangerous, so take action to remove yourself from the situation. Learn to be aware of the people around you and their actions so you don't become vulnerable to an attack. You have the right to be rude. You have the right to complain and possibly hurt someone's feelings if you suspect they may be trying to take advantage of you. Don't let unscrupulous people prey on your desire to remain polite—and teach your children about their “right to be rude”, too.

FLEE

If you know, or even suspect, that you are about to be assaulted, flee if you can! If you can flee, do so at the earliest possible moment. If there are people within hearing distance, scream and make as much noise as possible to discourage your attacker from pursuing you.

CONFRONT

If a sexual assault is imminent, you have no choice but to confront your assailant. You may fight or submit. Remember that this decision must be based on your safety and opportunities. No one else can make this decision for you.

If your choice is to submit, do so without guilt, knowing that you may be saving your life. The crime will still be rape, and your attacker is still just as guilty of a crime as he would be if you fought back. If you decide to fight, **FIGHT TO HURT**, and do so without any feelings of guilt or hesitation. Overcome your natural reluctance to hurt someone.

Columbia Police Department

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Know the facts about rape

- Rape is a violent crime — a hostile attack — an attempt to hurt and humiliate. It is NOT the result of “uncontrolled passions.”
- Rape can happen to anyone. Students, working women, wives, mothers, children, grandmothers, and even males are the victims of rape.
- Rape can occur anywhere and at anytime, in public or in your own home, day or night.
- Rapists are not necessarily strangers. In fact, in over one-third of reported cases, the rapist is an acquaintance, neighbor, friend or relative of the victim.
- Rape is one of the most underreported crimes. The majority of rapist continue until caught. So report any kind of sexual assault.

Prevention tips

The tips in this brochure are designed to increase your odds against sexual assault. The more you know about rape prevention, the better your chances are of never becoming a victim.

- First, know the facts about rape. Become aware of locations and situations where rape might occur and avoid them, if possible.
- Consider your alternatives if confronted by a rapist. Practice possible responses so that you can recall them even under the stress of an encounter.

Safety at home

Many rapes occur in or near the victim's home. One of the best ways to

prevent sexual assault is to practice good home security.

- Install effective locks on all doors and windows — and **use them**.
- Install a peephole viewer in your door, **NEVER** open your door without knowing who is on the other side. Require salespeople or repair people to show identification.
- If you are alone, use only your last name and initials on mail boxes and in telephone directories.
- If strangers telephone or come to your door, don't admit that you are alone.
- Don't let any strangers into your home— no matter what the reason or how dire the emergency is supposed to be. Offer to make an emergency phone call while they wait outside.
- If you live in an apartment, avoid being in the laundry room or garage by yourself, especially at night.
- If you come home and find a door or window open or signs of forced entry, **DON'T GO IN!** Go to the nearest phone and call the police or sheriff.

Don't walk into danger

Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you — especially if you are alone or it is dark. Know where help may be if you should need it.

- Whenever possible, travel with a friend.
- Stay in well-lighted areas as much as possible.
- Walk confidently, directly, and at a steady pace on the side of the street facing traffic. A rapist looks for someone who appears vulnerable.

- 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 lights and people. If a car appears to be following you, turn and walk on the other side of the street.
- If you are in danger, scream and run, or yell “fire.”

Car safety

- Keep your car in good working order and the gas tank at least half full.
- Always lock your car doors after entering or leaving your car.
- Park in well-lighted areas.
- Have your car keys in your hand and check the back seat area before entering your car.
- If you think you are being followed, drive to a public place or to a police or sheriff's station.
- If your car breaks down, turn on your flashers, open the hood, attach a white cloth to the antenna, and wait inside your car with the doors locked. If someone stops to help, stay in your car and ask them to call the police, a garage or a tow service for you.

Weapons

Carrying weapons for self-defense is a decision that should not be made without careful research and adequate training. Also, there are many laws which regulate and/or restrict the types of self-defense weapons available. **BE SAFE** — for more information, contact your local law enforcement agency.