



Safety Tips for Older Adults



Safety on the Streets

Purse snatching is one of the few crimes where older adults represent a greater proportion of those victimized. The best way to prevent becoming a target is to NOT carry a purse. For many people this is not practical. The following are some tips to both reduce the risk of being targeted as well as to limit injury if you are attacked.

- Attackers target those considered to be easy prey. Walk with your head up high, have a sense of purpose and confidence.
- When carrying your purse, wearing the strap across your body makes it harder for an attacker to take the purse off you.
- Carry keys and identification documents in your pocket. If your purse is stolen the thieves will not be able to break into your house.
- Do not carry large amounts of money.
- Do not over burden yourself by carrying extra bags or non-essential items in your purse.
- If you suspect you are being followed, cross the street, go to the nearest home, service station or business and call the police.

Home Security

There are a number of precautions that can be taken to reduce the chance of being a victim of break & enter or home invasion.

- Install a wide-angle peephole viewer in your front door which allows seeing visitors before opening the door. If visitors are not expected, verify the identity of the person through the peephole before opening the door.
- Keep a phone handy. Take a cordless phone to the door when there is knock, in the event you need to call for help.
- Make sure your door is made of solid wood or metal. A door is only as strong as its frame, install a metal frame or have the current frame reinforced.
- Install a security film or Plexiglas on the inside of windows. This will allow you to see out, but will make it difficult for a potential intruder to break the glass.
- Keep valuables in a safety deposit box at your bank. If this is not possible, keep them locked in a safe hiding place in your home. Have valuable items marked for identification or have pictures taken and store the pictures in a safe place.
- If you are going to be away for an extended period of time, it is important to take extra care in securing your home. Not only should your home be secure, but it should also appear lived in. Install timers to turn lights on and off and leave a radio on. Arrange to have your mail or newspaper held. Ask someone to check on your home to pick up any flyers or tend to the yard.

Frauds and Scams

While many older adults fear physical attacks, the criminal group targeting older adults the most are con artists. The following are a few popular frauds and scams that target older adults:

- **Grandchild or Family Member in Trouble:** The scammer will tell the victim that he/she has been arrested by a police service outside of their hometown and requires bail money. For verification, the victim is given a phone number to call, which will be answered by someone pretending to be a lawyer or police officer.
- **Funeral Chasers:** After a loved one has died, families will occasionally receive goods in the mail, which the company will claim were ordered by the deceased before they died. The company will then demand payment for the delivered goods.
- **Free Inspection:** This scam will involve a door-to-door repairman offering free inspections in the neighbourhood. The end result of the inspection will invariably be that expensive repairs are required immediately.
- **Fake Charities:** If someone calls your home, or shows up at the door claiming to represent a charity, ask them for their charity registration number, which every charity in Canada has.

If it sounds too good to be true, it often is. Do not make a decision on the spot, take some time, research and verify the offer that is being made. Often scammers use pressure tactics to force you to make a quick decision.

Never give out personal information or credit card information over the phone, the Internet or via email to unsolicited sources or companies. Banks will not send emails or text messages soliciting clients to verify or change security information. If you are unsure, contact your bank or company you have dealings with directly.

General Safety Tips

- Ensure your home is equipped with functioning smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each floor. Ensure they are tested every six months.
- Have a list of emergency contact numbers listed near all phones.
- Remove anything that could cause you to trip or slip while walking around your home, such as floor mats or rugs, electrical cords and unnecessary furniture.
- Install night-lights in hallways, near stairwells or bathrooms in case you need to get up at night.