

Factors Increasing Risk

- **Loss of hearing and sight** may decrease our awareness of our surroundings or approaching danger.
- **Difficulty in identifying the offender.**
- **Slower reaction times** can inhibit our physical ability to defend ourselves or our property.
- **Depending on public transportation** we might become stranded in areas we would otherwise avoid.
- **Living alone.**
- **Physical disabilities preventing us from running or fighting off the attacker.**
- **Challenges in remembering incidents about the assault.**
- **Dependence on a caretaker.**

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Any One Can Be a Victim:

Tips to Older Adults

One of the most common misconceptions surrounding rape is that sexual assault only happens to young, attractive females. Rape can happen to anyone, at any age. As we get older there are certain factors that increase our vulnerability which includes our routines and amount of social activity. Fortunately, we are not helpless in keeping ourselves safe. This brochure will provide information on the crime of sexual assault, as well as provide tips for reducing the chances of becoming a victim.

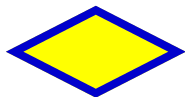
Considerations

For the Elderly

After an assault, victims often start thinking about their own mortality and feel a sense of increased helplessness. Victims may view the assault as shameful or something that should not be discussed. If the victim is isolated from a support system (family and friends) the feelings of alienation or being alone are intensified.

Age related mental impairments may hinder the ability to remember information necessary for making a police report. This could make it more difficult to express feelings regarding the assault.

There are often behavioral indicators of sexual assault including depression, isolation, acting fearful, changes in appetite and sleep disturbances.



Tips To Family and Friends

The victimization of someone we love can have a devastating effect on us. The following tips will be helpful in reducing the effects for the victim as well as others.

- ⇒ Allow the victim to continue to make all the decisions he/she made previous to the assault. Just because someone becomes a victim does not mean they are incapable of making choices.
- ⇒ Do not blame the victim in any way. Most victims are already questioning their responsibility in the assault. It is NEVER the victim's fault.
- ⇒ If the victim is feeling extremely fearful do not assume you know the answers to what she/he needs. ASK what would help the person feel more secure. People know what they need.
- ⇒ Avoid discussion of removing the independence of the victim. This is often one of the most fearful things for a person to have to consider.

Vulnerability Reduction

- ⇒ **Develop a buddy system with someone you can check-in with daily**
- ⇒ **Ask family and/or friends to visit you as often as possible.**
- ⇒ **Stay or become involved with as many community activities as possible. This will increase your network of friends and acquaintances.**
- ⇒ **Ask for identification before allowing anyone in your door.**
- ⇒ **Vary your travel routes and your everyday routine.**
- ⇒ **Never assume sexual abuse cannot happen to you.**
- ⇒ **Always call 911 if you are afraid or if you witness suspicious activity.**

