

## **Safety for Runners, Walkers and Bicyclists**

Runners, walkers, bicyclists. Lots of people are out there these days working to stay fit and get in shape. It's healthy, good for you and an inexpensive way to maintain a regular exercise regimen. While you're working out, you want to stay safe. Here we offer you a few tips on doing just that!

### **Before You Leave**

- Plan your outing. Always tell a family member or friend where you are going and when you will return. Let them know what your favorite exercise routes are.
- Know where telephones are located along the course, or carry a cellular phone with you.
- Wear an identification tag or carry a driver's license. If you don't have a place to carry your ID, write your name, phone number and blood type on the inside of your athletic shoe. Include any important medical information.
- Don't wear jewelry or carry cash.
- Wear reflective material so motorists can see you more easily.

### **On the Road**

- Stay alert at all times. The more aware you are, the less vulnerable you are.
- Run, walk, or bike with a partner or a dog.
- Don't wear headsets. If you wear them you won't hear an approaching car or attacker.
- Listen to your surroundings.
- Exercise in familiar areas. Know which businesses or stores are open.
- Vary your route. That way, a potential attacker won't get to know your routine.
- Avoid unpopulated areas, deserted streets, and overgrown trails. Especially avoid poorly lit areas at night.
- Run clear of parked cars or bushes. Run against traffic so you can observe approaching automobiles.
- Trust your intuition about a person or an area. If you are unsure about an area, or feel unsafe, leave immediately.
- Ignore verbal harassment. Use discretion in acknowledging strangers. Look directly at others and be observant, but keep your distance and keep moving.
- Be careful if anyone in a car asks you for directions; if you answer, keep at least a full arm's length from the car.
- If you think you are being followed, change direction and head for open stores, theaters or a lighted house.
- Have your door key ready before you reach your home.
- Call police immediately if something happens to you or someone else, or you notice anyone out of the ordinary. It's also a good idea to check with police about any criminal activity in the area you plan to run/walk/bike.

## **Stay Alert!**

Sometimes runners and walkers get lulled into a "zone" where they are so focused on their exercise they lose track of what's going on around them. This state can make runners and walkers more vulnerable to attacks. Walk and run with confidence and purpose. If you get bored running without music, practice identifying characteristics of strangers and memorizing license tags to keep you from "zoning out."

## **Going in the Evening or Early Morning**

You didn't get a chance to exercise during daylight hours, and you still want to get in that "daily routine" before calling it a night, or before the sun rises. When exercising while it's dark, the best advice is to get off the streets and go for the security of a well-lighted outdoor track or consider running on an indoor track or tread mill. If these options don't work for you, consider the following tips before you head out:

- Make sure people can see you. Think about where you are going and how well lighted it may or may not be.
- Going out at dusk or at night is dangerous without some type of reflective device on your clothing. Many athletic shoes have reflective qualities built in, but also consider a vest complete with reflective tape.
- Watch the road: wet or icy spots are considerably harder to see in the dark.
- Keep alert! Dawn and dusk offer convenient shadows for muggers and other crooks.

## **When You're Away from Home**

Many people who exercise like the idea of maintaining their regimen when they are traveling. But remember, just because you are away from home doesn't mean you can let your guard down when you exercise.

- Check with the hotel staff or concierge to find safe routes for exercise. If there is not an acceptable place to exercise outdoors, see if the hotel can arrange access to a health club or gym.
- Become familiar with your exercise course before you start. Get a map and study it.
- Remember the street address of the hotel. Carry a card with your hotel address along with your personal ID.
- Leave your room key with the front desk.
- Follow your usual safety rules.