

TIPS from the National Personal Safety Day

You can improve your safety in and around your home by taking a few, simple precautions.

Do you stay alert on the streets when nearing home?

Most of us feel more relaxed in our own neighbourhood than in an unfamiliar area but it's important to not let our guard down when nearing home. Always stay alert until you are safely indoors.

Have your keys ready in your hand when you reach your door so that you are not left fumbling about in your bag or pockets on your doorstep.

Think of safe places in your neighbourhood where you could go to if you felt threatened on your way home. These could include a friend's house, petrol station, shop or pub.

Consider carrying a personal safety alarm, which could be used to shock or disorientate an attacker if necessary giving you vital seconds to get away.

Is the entrance to your home designed for safety?

Keeping the front entrance to your home well-lit and in clear view of neighbours or passers-by can help to deter intruders. Therefore it's a good idea to install security lighting and keep hedges/bushes trimmed back to allow clear views and avoid having places where someone could conceal themselves.

However it's a good idea to plant dense, thorny plants underneath windows and around the perimeter of the garden to deter intruders. If you have a rear garden, it's advisable to have a secure boundary, which should be high/awkward enough to make scaling it difficult.

Consider using crunchy gravel on drives/ paths, as this will make any approach noisier.

Do you keep your home secure?

If you haven't already done so, consider investing in good door and window locks. Check all locks before leaving the house and also keep front and back doors and accessible windows locked to outsiders when you are in the house. In the summer, it's safer to open a lot of windows a little way (and locking them to prevent them being opened further) than it is to open one or two windows far enough for someone to climb through.

If you live in flats or multi-occupied dwellings, never admit someone through the entry phone system unless you know them or are expecting them.

Always try to make it look as if there is someone in the house when there isn't. This will help to deter burglars and will make you feel safer when returning home.

If you return home and suspect something is not right and that there could be an intruder in your home, don't enter the property alone. Call the police and wait until they arrive.

If you live alone, does anyone know if you are safe?

Try to ensure that someone always knows where you are and that you are ok. Consider arranging with a friend/family member to call each other each night (or if you are going out anywhere) to check that you are both safe and well. If this feels too intrusive, a quick text would be enough.

Agree what they should do if they are unable to contact you after trying several times, e.g. calling round to check if you are ok.

Do you take precautions against bogus callers?

It's advisable to install a door chain, spy-hole and good outside lighting. Before opening the door, check through the spy-hole or through a window if you know them or not. If not, put the door chain on before opening the door and ask the caller for proof of identity. Keep them waiting until you're satisfied, even if that means calling their company to check. Once you have admitted the caller, don't leave them on their own while you go into a different room. Thieves sometimes work in pairs. Therefore don't open the front door to someone you don't know, without locking your back door first.

Never let someone you don't know into your house without checking their identification thoroughly.

Never let someone into your house because you feel rude not to.

CAN Sharing personal data put you at risk in your home?

Avoid broadcasting - whether online or in the pub/at work/in the gym etc. - that you live alone or will be alone in the house at a specific time. Keep this information for people you know well.

Likewise, don't let strangers know details of when your house will be empty for any given period.

It's a good idea to keep a light on when you are going out so that when you return it doesn't look like you are returning to an empty property.