

## Tips for Staying Engaged in Your Community Safely

### Staying Safe in Your Community

Staying engaged and active in your community is important to many and can help maintain your physical and cognitive health. Social engagement combats loneliness, and volunteerism can give you a sense of place and purpose, within your community. Whether you are volunteering, assisting a neighbor, or just heading out for a walk, don't forget to attend to your own safety in each situation. The key to staying safe is an awareness of what is happening around you at all times. If you are planning on getting involved in community activities, consider the safety tips highlighted below.

- Avoid traveling in high risk areas at any time of day (isolated areas, alleys, vacant lots, abandoned buildings and construction sites). Walk well-lit busy streets, and do not walk alone at night.
- Walk with a group when possible. Walking with two or more people reduces the risk of assault significantly.
- Pay attention to your surroundings and walk with confidence.
- When going out, inform a family member or trusted friend where you are going and when you plan to return, and always carry a cell phone.
- Do not carry any more cash than is necessary, and keep your purse or wallet closed until you need it. Keep your purse or wallet close at all times; purses should be strapped over your shoulder.
- Have your key ready as you approach your front door upon returning home.

- Have your key ready as you approach your car door, and visually check the back seat before entering the vehicle.
- When stopped in traffic, leave sufficient space between you and the car in front of you in case you need to drive away.
- If a stranger attempts to enter your vehicle, blow the horn to attract attention and drive away.
- Choose well-lit parking areas, and park near entrances when possible.

### Staying Safe While Exercising Outdoors

When heading out to exercise, it is also important to be thinking about safety. Have a plan, and, as mentioned above, be sure to let others know where you are going and when you plan to be back. Also, choose well-lit places with other people around, and always bring your cell phone.

- Carry your ID with you, as well as emergency contact information and a small amount of cash.
- If you are wearing headphones, keep the volume low so you can remain alert to your surroundings; also, avoid talking on your phone as you walk for the same reason.
- Wear light or bright colored clothing during the day and reflective material at night. Also, carry a flashlight and put lights on the front and back of our bike when traveling at night.
- Wear sturdy shoes, appropriate for your activity that provide good footing.

***A more complete list, as well as additional information, provided by the National Institute on Aging is available [here](#).***