

Walker Safety

Each year more and more people take up running and walking because it is a quick, inexpensive way to stay fit. If you travel often, running or walking is an excellent way to maintain your exercise regimen. Also, many community centers and neighborhood and senior groups are starting walking clubs. Consider joining one, it's a great way to meet new people. Here are few pointers to help you keep safe when you hit the road.

Before You Leave

- Plan your outing. Always tell someone where you are going and when you will return. Tell friends and family of your favorite exercise routes.
- Know where telephones are located along the course.
- 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 medical information.
- Don't wear jewelry or carry cash.
- Wear reflective material.

On the Road

- Tell a family member or friend where you are going and the time you expect to be back.
- Stay alert at all times. The more aware you are, the less vulnerable you are.
- Run or walk 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.
- Consider carrying a cellular phone.
- Exercise in familiar areas. Know which businesses or stores are open.
- Vary your route.
- Avoid unpopulated areas, deserted streets, and overgrown trails. Especially avoid poorly lighted areas at night.
- Run clear of parked cars or bushes.
- Ignore verbal harassment. Use discretion in acknowledging strangers. Look directly at others and be observant, but keep your distance and keep moving.
- Run against traffic so you can observe approaching automobiles.
- Trust your intuition about a person or an area. React based on that intuition and avoid areas you feel unsure about.
- 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 is also a good idea to check with police about any criminal activity in the area you plan to run.

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."

Running and Walking in the Evening or Early Morning

OK, so you missed the opportunity to exercise during the light of day, but you still want to get in a quick three miles before turning in for the night or before the sun rises. The best advice when exercising while it's dark is to get off the streets and head to the security of a well-lighted outdoor track or consider running on an indoor track or tread mill. If you are a walker, consider laps around an indoor shopping mall. If these options are not available or just aren't for you, consider these tips before heading 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.

Away From Home

Many people have taken up running and walking so that they will be able to exercise when they are traveling. 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.