

Domestic and Dating Violence

What Can I Do To Be Safe?

Call the police

If you feel you are in danger from your abuser at any time, you can call 911 or your local police.

Consider the following:

- If you are in danger when the police come, they can protect you.
- They can help you and your children leave your home safely.
- They can arrest your abuser when they have enough proof that you have been abused.
- They can arrest your abuser if a personal protection order (PPO) has been violated.
- When the police come, tell them everything the abuser did that made you call.
- If you have been hit, tell the police where. Tell them how many times it happened. Show them any marks left on your body. Marks may take time to show up. If you see a mark after the police leave, call the police to take pictures of the marks. They may be used in court.
- If your abuser has broken any property, show the police.
- The police can give you information on domestic violence programs and shelters.
- The police must make a report saying what happened to you. Police reports can be used in court if your abuser is charged with a crime.
- Get the officers' names, badge numbers, and the report number in case you need a copy of the report.
- A police report can be used to help you get a Personal Protection Order.

Get support from friends and family

Tell your supportive family, friends and co-workers what has happened.

Find a safe place

It is not fair. You should not have to leave your home because of what your abuser has done. But sometimes it is the only way you will be safe. There are shelters that can help you move to a different city or state. Call your domestic violence hotline in your area.

Get medical help

If you have been hurt, go to the hospital or your doctor. Domestic violence advocates (people to help you) may be called to the hospital. They are there to give you support. You may ask medical staff to call one for you

Medical records can be important in court cases. They can also help you get a PPO. Give all the information about your injuries and who hurt you that you feel safe to give.

Special medical concerns

- Sometimes you may not even know you are hurt.
- What seems like a small injury could be a big one.
- If you are pregnant and you were hit in your stomach, tell the doctor. Many abusers hurt unborn children.
- Domestic violence victims can be in danger of closed head injuries. This is because their abusers often hit them in the head. If any of these things happen after a hit to the head, get medical care right away. Symptoms may include:

Memory loss

Dizziness

Problems with eyesight

Throwing-up

Headache that will not go away

Get a personal protection order

Personalized Safety Plan

Your safety is the most important thing. Listed below are tips to help keep you safe. The resources in this book can help you to make a safety plan that works best for you. It is important to get help with your safety plan. Many of the resources listed in this book can help you.

If you are in an abusive relationship, think about...

1. Having important phone numbers nearby for you and your children. Numbers to have are the police, hotlines, friends and the local shelter.
2. Friends or neighbors you could tell about the abuse. Ask them to call the police if they hear angry or violent noises. If you have children, teach them how to dial 911. Make up a code word that you can use when you need help.
3. How to get out of your home safely. Practice ways to get out.
4. Safer places in your home where there are exits and no weapons. If you feel abuse is going to happen try to get your abuser to one of these safer places.
5. Any weapons in the house. Think about ways that you could get them out of the house.
6. Even if you do not plan to leave, think of where you could go. Think of how you might leave. Try doing things that get you out of the house - taking out the trash, walking the pet or going to the store. Put together a bag of things you use every day (see the checklist below). Hide it where it is easy for you to get.
7. Going over your safety plan often.

If you consider leaving your abuser, think about...

1. Four places you could go if you leave your home.

2. People who might help you if you left. Think about people who will keep a bag for you. Think about people who might lend you money. Make plans for your pets.
3. Keeping change for phone calls or getting a cell phone.
4. Opening a bank account or getting a credit card in your name.
5. How you might leave. Try doing things that get you out of the house - taking out the trash, walking the family pet, or going to the store. Practice how you would leave.
6. How you could take your children with you safely. There are times when taking your children with you may put all of your lives in danger. You need to protect yourself to be able to protect your children.
7. Putting together a bag of things you use every day. Hide it where it is easy for you to get.

ITEMS TO TAKE, IF POSSIBLE

Children (if it is safe)	Money	Keys to car, house, work
Extra clothes	Medicine	Birth certificates
Social security cards	School and medical records	<input type="checkbox"/> Bankbooks, credit cards
Important papers for you and your children	Passports, green cards, work permits	Mortgage payment book, unpaid bills
Bankbooks, credit cards	Driver's license	Car registration
Welfare identification	Lease/rental agreement	Insurance papers
PPO, divorce papers, custody orders	Pictures, jewelry, things that mean a lot to you	Items for your children (toys, blankets, etc.)
Address book		

8. Think about reviewing your safety plan often.

If you have left your abuser, think about...

1. Your safety - you still need to.
2. Getting a cell phone that is programmed to only call 911. These phones are for when you need to call the police and cannot get to any other phone.
3. Getting a Personal Protection Order (PPO) from the court. Keep a copy with you all the time. Give a copy to the police, people who take care of your children, their schools and your boss.
4. Changing the locks. Consider putting in stronger doors, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, a security system and outside lights.
5. Telling friends and neighbors that your abuser no longer lives with you. Ask them to call the police if they see your abuser near your home or children.

6. Telling people who take care of your children the names of people who are allowed to pick them up. If you have a PPO protecting your children, give their teachers and babysitters a copy of it.
7. Telling someone at work about what has happened. Ask that person to screen your calls. If you have a PPO that includes where you work, consider giving your boss a copy of it and a picture of the abuser. Think about and practice a safety plan for your workplace. This should include going to and from work.
8. Not using the same stores or businesses that you did when you were with your abuser.
9. Someone that you can call if you feel down. Call that person if you are thinking about going to a support group or workshop.
10. Safe way to speak with your abuser if you must.
11. Going over your safety plan often.

WARNING: Abusers try to control their victim's lives. When abusers feel a loss of control - like when victims try to leave them - the abuse often gets worse. Take special care when you leave. Keep being careful even after you have left.

This section on personalized safety planning adapted from the Metro Nashville Police Department's personalized safety plan.