

FROM THE OFFICE OF DR.

Planning ahead: How to stay safe

If you are being abused, making a safety plan now may help you when you have to act quickly in the future. The following ideas are ways that other women have planned for their safety. Some of these ideas may work for you. You may come up with additional ideas for yourself. You know your own situation better than anyone else, so plan what will work best for you.

- **Hide money** or put it somewhere safe so you can leave quickly.
- **Make copies** of birth certificates, immunization records, Social Security numbers, and other important documents to keep in safe locations away from home such as at work, the homes of trusted family members or friends, or hidden in convenient locations.
- **Hide a spare car key** or bus or subway pass that you can grab quickly.
- **Keep a list** of hotline numbers, or memorize the **1-800-799-SAFE** National Domestic Violence Hotline number.
- **Develop a code** with friends, family, or neighbors to let them know when you need help in an emergency. If you have children, teach them a signal (like a code word) that means they should call the police or go for help. You may want to have a special code for neighbors (like putting on a particular light or opening a certain window) that means you want them to call the police.
- **Plan your exit.** Know which doors, windows, stairwells, elevators, or fire escapes you can use if you have to leave quickly. Practice using them so that they feel familiar to you.
- **Know how to reach the police** and your local women's shelter.
- Every day, **think about where you can go** immediately if you have to leave. Is a neighbor home today? A relative? A friend?
- **Remove weapons** from your home if you can.
- Something to think about: When you cannot get away and your partner becomes violent, **which room is the safest** for you to get to? Is there a room that has a phone and a lock on the door? Can you stay out of rooms with easy weapons, such as the kitchen?
- **Try not to leave without your children.** But if you have to leave your children with the abuser, call the police immediately after you escape.

Adapted from Chang JC. Domestic violence. In: Bieber EJ, Sanfilippo JS, Horowitz IR, editors. *Clinical Gynecology*. Philadelphia, PA; Elsevier, Inc; 2006:79–89.

For more information

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE
www.thehotline.org

Futures Without Violence
www.futureswithoutviolence.org

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
www.ncadv.org



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