

Health and Wellness:
Summer Safety with Young Adults and Everyone
(for Cruise Ships and General Tips)

By Laura Seigel, M.S.W. (laura@tpsw.org)

While everyone wants to have fun during their summer break (whether that be on a cruise ship, to a faraway land, a nearby location or anywhere in between), dreadfully unfunny things happen. Here are some safety pointers for you and your loved ones:

Travel Safety Guidelines

1. There's Safety in Numbers – A lone vacationer is much easier to target than those traveling with another person or with a group. Offenders will usually make efforts to gain their victim's trust before they make their move. Many assailants will take their victim to an isolated area where it is impossible to be seen or heard. All travelers should stay with a group or at least one other trusted person as much as possible, particularly at night. When traveling with younger children, always keep them in site. As horrendous as this sounds, children are also targets – perhaps because of their small size or the offender's revolting preference. One of the many responsibilities of a parent is to protect their child which includes monitoring their child's location 24/7 (usually against the child's thoughts of unfairness). Better safe than sorry!

2. Friendly Is Fine, But Still Be Cautious – Getting lost in the laid-back vacation environment and letting one's guard down is easy. Friendships can spawn from someone who was recently a stranger in a short period of time. Perhaps surprising but astonishingly truthful is the fact that most sexual predators are some of the most friendly and charismatic people you will meet, and these qualities are used to their advantage. Making new friends is enjoyable, but be very careful with whom you share personal information. For information on date rape prevention, read Additional Resources #2. Never allow yourself or your family members to be alone with strangers, especially crew members.

3. Stay Away from Isolated Areas – To greatly reduce your risk of becoming a victim of sexual assault or rape, avoid isolated areas where it can be easy for perpetrators to violate your rights. Always stay within reach of trusted family or friends and avoid dark areas where crimes are easier to commit. Danger could be lurking behind closed doors. Therefore, never go to a stranger's room. Perhaps because of the alcohol or some another reason, sexual assault rates on cruise ships are about 50% higher than on land.

4. Safety Cannot Be Assured – Even if you feel completely safe somewhere, hundreds of crimes and accidents occur in many areas of the world. Unfortunately, cruise ship sexual assault and rape incidents increase each year. While certainly not all cruise ship crew members are sexual predators, many of these crimes do involve a crew member. Keep your guard up at all times, no matter how safe you might feel.

5. Communication is Key – Always keep in constant communication with your travel mates. Establish a meeting point at the start of the vacation so you have an established meeting location if you lose touch or get lost. Cell phones signals often times become inoperable in remote areas or at sea. Walkie Talkies (with sufficient range) are extremely helpful.

6. Keep Your Personal Items Secure – There are many cities where pickpocket thieves prey upon tourists. To keep your items secure, read #3 below.

By following these easy-to-follow tips, the chance that you or a loved one will be targeted is greatly diminished. And have fun!

Additional Resources

This is only a cursory overview. To learn more, here are a few links to get you started:

- (1) <http://www.cruiserape.com/tips-on-how-to-reduce-your-risk-of-cruise-ship-sexual-assault.php>
- (2) http://www.theventionsocialworker.org/uploads/Article_67a_-_Date_Rape_Prevention_-_April_2015.pdf
- (3) <http://www.travelinsurancereview.net/tips-and-advice/travel-safety-tips/safe-travelers-love-money-belts/>

Disclaimer for this article and all others written by Laura Seigel, MSW: These articles are intended as a reference only. The information provided is designed to save and improve lives by helping others to make informed decisions about health issues. It is not intended as a substitute for any treatment. If anyone reading this article suspects a medical problem, please seek competent medical care in a timely fashion.

(Last updated: 5/29/15)