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Prevention

Continued from Page 5B

In addition, a woman may feel secure because she has a chemical device in her purse or backpack, ignoring the Murphy-like law that says "whatever you're looking for is always the last thing you find." Such devices need to be accessible immediately, Morgan says.

Noise makers, such as whistles or "screech alarms" also can provide a feeling of false security. "Noise makers may cause (an attacker) to make you be quiet," warns Morgan.

While loud noises may scare rapists away, there's no guarantee that a potential rescuer will know that the noise is a call for help, says Gail Wiemann, director of the Rape Crisis Network.

Knowing self-defense probably is the best bet, Wiemann says. A number of defense courses are available through the Eugene Department of Parks and Recreation (687-5333), Lane Community College (747-4501, extension 2545), and the University.

"Major studies show that women who fight back have a better chance of getting away," she says, "but they also have better chances of getting hurt."

But a woman who chooses to fight should not be half-hearted about it, Wiemann warns.

"If you can't hurt somebody, don't fight."

Morgan says the locale should influence a decision to fight or not. "If you're going to do something aggressive, you need someplace to run to," she says.

And she agrees with Wiemann that a woman who is going to fight an attacker "needs to know the vital points and be willing to hurt someone."

Wiemann suggests walking on lit streets at night and, whenever possible, walking in

the middle of the street instead of on sidewalks. If a woman walks regularly at night, she should change her route often and know where all-night stores and gas stations are located, she says.

"Hitchhiking is dangerous, but if someone is going to do it, never get into a car with more than one man in it," Wiemann says. Hitchhikers should take the trouble to memorize the license plate of their ride. Check for door handles, Wiemann says and "pay close attention to where you're going."

"And don't take rides with someone who turns around to pick you up. That's real suspicious," she says.

Wiemann says, "(Women) tend to give out personal information without thinking about it. Some friendly person in class may seem non-threatening, so you give out your phone number or something. Then you start getting obscene phone calls."

"You may feel stupid being suspicious," she says, "but if you weigh that against the dangers..."

Because more than 50 percent of rapes occur in the home, strong door and window locks and other security measures are imperative.

Home security information is available through the Eugene Police Department's COP team. A member of the team will visit a home and check exterior lighting, landscaping, doors and locks and will provide a written recommendation free of charge. For an appointment, call 687-2677.

In the event of rape, a woman should call the police if she wants to report it. The Rape Crisis Network (485-6700) provides support for rape victims and leaves the decision to report or not up to the victim.

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