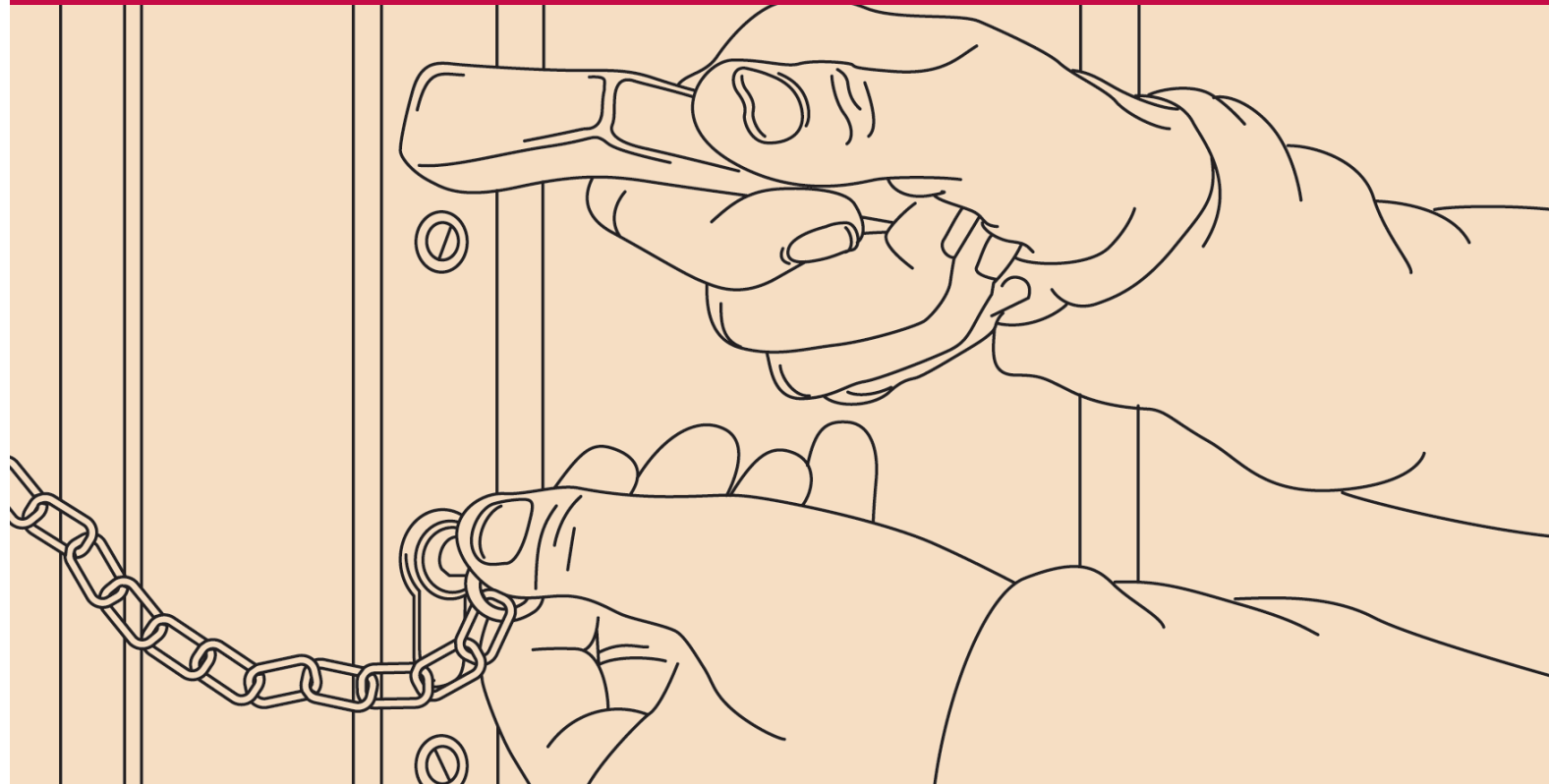


Your Security



Personal safety at home and in the street

Advice for older people

Endorsed by

Safe
Partnership Limited

Help the Aged produces a range of free advice leaflets for older people

Financial leaflets

- Can You Claim It?
- Check Your Tax
- Claiming Disability Benefits
- Questions on Pensions
- Thinking About Money

Housing and home safety leaflets

- Care Homes
- Fire
- Help in Your Home
- Housing Matters
- Keep Out the Cold
- Your Safety
- Your Security

Health leaflets

- Bereavement
- Better Hearing
- Better Sight
- Bladder and Bowel Weakness
- Elder Abuse
- Fitter Feet
- Healthy Bones
- Healthy Eating
- Keeping Mobile
- Managing Your Medicines
- Shingles
- Staying Steady

Leaflets are free of charge and available from the Information Resources Team at the address on the back page, email adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk or fax 0870 770 3282.

This leaflet is endorsed by Safe Partnership, the national charity that secures the homes of victims of domestic violence, burglary, hate and homophobic crime, in particular older victims and those who are vulnerable to such crimes. Its mission is to provide free practical help and advice to people in their homes.

The information in this leaflet is correct at the time of printing in February 2007.

If you would like this leaflet in another format, such as large print or audio tape, please contact the Information Resources Team on **020 7278 1114**.

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Many of us are anxious about crime. But the fact is that older people are less likely to be attacked or robbed than people in any other age group. A crime can often be avoided by taking a few simple precautions. This leaflet explains steps you can take to make you feel more secure both at home and when you're out and about.

Locking up

Most break-ins are not the work of professional burglars. Many are carried out by opportunist thieves who get into your home through an open or insecure door or window.

When you go out:

- Be sure to lock all the outside doors and check that all the windows are closed. Many burglaries happen during the afternoon, so even if you are just popping out for a few minutes during the day always lock up fully before you go.
- Remember to lock garage windows and doors when you leave, particularly if your garage is attached to your house with a door leading to the inside.
- Keep your ladder and garden tools locked away as they can be very useful for the opportunist burglar.
- Always keep your keys in a safe place. The first places that a burglar will look for your door key are under the mat, in a flower pot or on a piece of string through the letter box. Never leave any keys in the locks or lying around the house.
- If you're out for the evening, leave a front room light on (not the hall) and perhaps put the radio on too. Draw the curtains leaving a small gap at the top so you can see the light from outside. An opportunist thief may think there is someone in the house.

If you are going away on holiday:

- Remember to cancel milk, newspapers and other deliveries. To a burglar a dozen milk bottles on the doorstep or a newspaper sticking out of the letter box is an invitation to break in.
- If you have a garden it is a good idea to mow your lawn before you travel.
- Don't close curtains or blinds as they are a giveaway, especially during the day. You could plug a lamp into a time switch which will automatically turn it on in the evenings whilst you're away. However, don't switch on the lamp in a room which passers-by can see into when the light is on.
- If possible ask a friend or neighbour to keep an eye on your home for you. When you travel, remember not to display your home address on the outside of your luggage.

Making your doors and windows safe

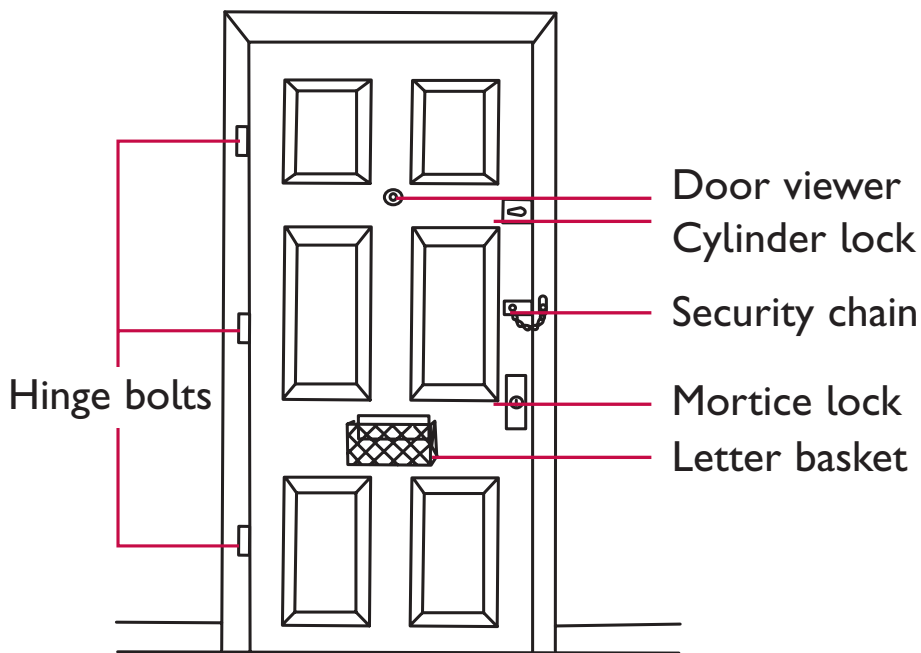
Wooden doors

To be secure, a solid wooden front door should have a strong frame, two good locks, a door viewer and a security chain. A letter basket can also be a useful deterrent to tampering with locks through the letter box.

Ideally, a wooden door should be fitted with:

- one mortice deadlock with at least five levers, labelled with a Kitemark to show that it conforms with British Standard BS 3621:1980; **and**
- one cylinder rim-mounted deadlock (nightlatch).

The gap between the two locks should be one-third of the door's height.

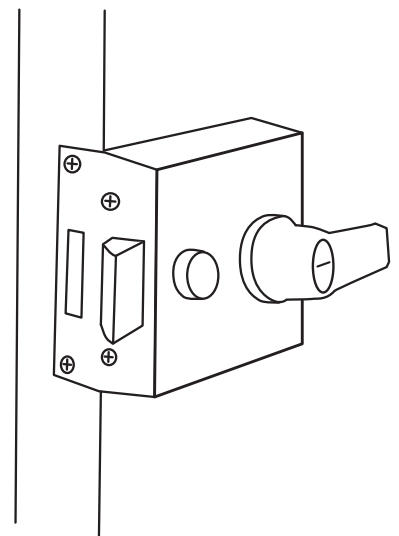


Mortice locks can be fitted to doors at least 4.4cm (one and three-quarter inches) thick. If your door is thinner than this, a mortice lock will weaken it. Instead, fit the door with a cylinder rim-

mounted deadlock, labelled with BS 3621:1980 and a Kitemark.

A **cylinder rim-mounted lock** (also known as a nightlatch or a surface-mounted lock) is fixed onto the inside of the door. A metal cylinder goes through the door and has a keyhole on the outside.

A selection of cylinder rim-mounted locks are available which offer varying levels of security. Ideally, choose a lock with an automatic deadlock and a handle, which can be locked with the key from the inside or outside of the door. The deadlock will prevent a burglar slipping the latch with a credit card from the outside, and locking the handle will stop a thief releasing the deadlock after breaking glass in the door and reaching in. A cylinder rim-mounted lock that cannot be deadlocked will not provide adequate security on its own, so it should only be used in combination with another lock.



Mortice security bolts will provide extra protection for back or side doors (which are easier targets for a burglar as they are often located out of sight). Mortice security bolts can only be

operated by a key from the inside of the door. They offer more protection than the sliding type of bolt which could be opened from the outside, particularly if any glass in the door can be smashed or taken out.

Mortice security bolts should be fitted about 23cm (nine inches) from the top and bottom of the door. But if this makes them awkward to use, get them put at a height you can easily reach. It is not a good idea to have mortice security bolts on your front door or main exit as they could slow down your escape if there is a fire or other emergency. On doors that open outwards, it is also worth fitting hinge bolts. These provide extra reinforcement and protect doors from being forced open at the hinges.

Patio doors

Patio doors should be secured with specially designed patio door locks, fitted at the top and bottom of the door. Some patio doors can easily be lifted off their runners. To prevent the door being removed, fit anti-lift locks and ensure the sliding section is inside your house.

Windows

Open windows are an invitation to burglars. Closed windows fitted with window locks are an effective deterrent. It is rare for a burglar to break a window in order to climb through the broken glass. It is more likely they will reach through and open it, or a nearby window, by releasing the catch. Remember to remove keys from locked windows. Keep the keys in a safe place, out of sight and reach, not on the windowsill.

PVCu and metal framed windows or doors

If you're thinking of buying PVCu or metal framed windows and doors, make sure they come with good built-in locks as it may

not be possible to add better locks once they're installed. Ask if the door or windows comply with BS 7950:1997, which relate to security, and, if you are buying a PVCu door, think about getting one which is fitted with a multi-point locking system.

Make sure all your doors and windows are secure – French windows, and back and side doors are vulnerable too. It is a good idea to get locks and bolts fitted by a qualified locksmith. Check if they are a member of the Master Locksmiths Association. See page 17.

Extra security

In addition to locks, there are other more sophisticated security devices available, such as special outdoor lighting and intruder alarms. Ask your local crime prevention officer or Neighbourhood Watch group if you need further information on these. See pages 16–18.

Help with getting and fitting security devices

There are schemes all over the UK offering home security services, such as providing and fitting locks and chains, for older people in need. Help the Aged runs a HandyVan home safety service in selected areas of the UK. To find out if the service operates in your area call **01255 473999**.

There may be other similar schemes in your community. Try contacting:

- your local crime prevention officer;
- a local Age Concern group;
- your local council; or
- Safe Partnership.

See pages 16–18 for more details.

Bogus callers

Most people who call at your home will be genuine. But it is a good idea to take precautions when answering the door to people you don't know.

Bogus callers are people who use various stories to get into your home so they can steal from you or trick you out of money. They may pose as staff from the council, a gas, water or electricity company or even a police officer. Some may pretend to be ordinary people in need of help: for example, they could ask to use your phone in an emergency. They often work in twos or more and can be men, women or even children – one may distract you while the other steals your belongings. You should also look out for people who try to get you to pay for unnecessary work or pushy salespeople selling products you don't want.

Keep your cash safe

Bogus callers tend to target older people as they think they are more likely to have cash in their home. Large amounts of money are safest in a bank, building society or Post Office Card Account.

If in doubt keep them out

Often, and quite unnecessarily, people feel embarrassed about refusing to let someone in at the door. But you should only let someone in when you are absolutely sure they are genuine. Before you open your door to someone you don't know follow the simple lock, stop, chain, check advice below:

- **Lock.** Make sure you lock all your outer doors before you go to the front door. Some bogus callers will keep you chatting on the doorstep while another gets in through a back door or window and steals your belongings.

- **Stop.** Think about whether you are expecting anyone before you open the door.
- **Chain.** Always put the door chain on and look out of the window or spy hole to see who is there before opening the door.
- **Check.** Ask who they are, what they want and to prove their identity.

Who's on your doorstep?

If a caller is from an organisation ask if you can see their proof of identity. Keep the door chain on while you do this or ask them to post their identity details through the letter box. If you are unsure, check their identity by phoning the company they say they are from – get the number from your phone book or utility bill rather than calling the number they give you. Shut the door while you telephone. If you don't have a telephone send them away. You can always ask the caller to come back another time when someone will be with you. Most callers are genuine and will not mind you taking these precautions. It is particularly important to do this if there is more than one person on your doorstep.

If you find it difficult to see who is at the door, particularly at night, you may find a light at your door useful. You can buy lights which will switch on automatically when you open the front door or if someone walks up your path.

If a person who seems in need comes to your door, only help if you have someone with you. Don't worry if you choose not to help – a genuine person would understand.

If someone is trying to sell you a product or offers to do repairs or improvements to your home don't agree to anything, sign a contract or pay money until you have talked to someone else.

Above all, don't let anyone persuade you to go to your bank and withdraw cash for a payment. For more tips see

our free information sheet no.19, *Buying Goods and Services at Home*. Contact the Information Resources Team at the address on the back page for a copy.

When the caller has gone take the door chain off again.

If you are still suspicious dial 999 and ask for the police.

Schemes for extra peace of mind

Many organisations will make an appointment with you before they visit. Ask your gas, electricity and water companies if they run a password scheme. If so, their staff can give you a password arranged between you and them to prove they are genuine. This is particularly useful if you're sight impaired and find it difficult to check identity cards.

In some areas, Help the Aged can provide a door alert button which you can press if an unexpected caller is at your door. When you press the button, you will instantly be connected to an operator in a 24 hour response centre who will help you as you answer the door. For information on which areas are covered or to find out how the service works call **SeniorLink** on **0845 603 4576** or write to the SeniorSafety team at the address on page 16.

In some areas there are **nominated neighbour schemes**. When someone you don't know calls at your door, you can hold up a yellow card which tells the caller to go to a neighbour's house. Your neighbour will check their identity for you. If the caller is genuine, your neighbour will then come back to your house, with them, and will wait with you whilst the caller carries out their business. Contact your local Neighbourhood Watch or crime prevention officer to see if there is a nominated neighbour scheme in your area.

Keeping up appearances

Bogus callers often target homes that look in need of care and attention. This could include an untidy garden, peeling paint, broken bricks or missing roof tiles.

If you are finding it harder to maintain your home and garden you may be able to get help. Local groups such as Age Concern, care and repair schemes or volunteer bureaux, often offer practical help and advice to help you look after your property.

Protecting your belongings

Insurance

Good insurance cover will ease the financial worry of replacing stolen items. Many insurance companies offer reduced premiums for people with good home security and to members of Neighbourhood Watch schemes. Help the Aged operates an insurance scheme specifically for older people. For more information, call **Help the Aged Insurance Services** on 0800 41 31 80.

Marking your possessions

Your valuables are more likely to be found by the police if you keep a record of serial numbers and mark your property with your postcode. You can do this by etching, die-stamping or writing on them with a security marker that can only be read under an ultra-violet light. Your local crime prevention officer or Neighbourhood Watch group can give you details of suppliers. See pages 16–18. They can also tell you where to get a window sticker to warn thieves that your property is marked. In addition, keep a full list of items you value, along with descriptions and colour photographs. This can help the police return stolen property to you if it is recovered.

Personal safety when out and about

Crimes in public places are very rare. But it is something many of us worry about. The following tips will help you to feel and stay safe when you're out and about.

On the street

- Plan your route before you go.
- Try to use busy, well-lit areas.
- It is a good idea to spread your money and valuables around your body. For example, keep your keys in your coat pocket and your money in a closely carried bag.
- Keep valuables out of sight.
- Don't carry large sums of money. If your pension is paid straight into your bank or Post Office Card Account you don't have to draw it all out in one go – you can leave some in your account for safe keeping.
- Before you use a cash point check that there is no one hovering about. Always safeguard your Personal Identification Number (PIN).
- If you use a wheelchair, keep your things beside you rather than hanging them on the back of the chair.
- If you think you are being followed, keep moving and head for a busy area; tell someone what is happening or call the police.
- Keep your handbag in sight all the time, not slung on your back like a rucksack.
- Shout loudly to grab attention in an emergency.
- Consider carrying a personal alarm. If you use a mobile phone have your useful numbers programmed and ready to use, but keep it out of sight.

- Remember, if someone tries to snatch something from you it may be best to let them take it.

On public transport

- Try to wait for public transport in busy, well-lit areas.
- You may feel safer if you sit near other people. If there are not many people about sit near the driver if you are on the bus or, if you can, by the guard if you are on the train. Try to be near the bell or emergency alarm.
- If someone makes you feel uncomfortable move away.

Getting a taxi

- Keep the number of a reliable licensed taxi company handy.
- Book a taxi before you go out. When it arrives check it is the one you ordered before you get in. If you're in any doubt ask the driver to tell you the name of the person who booked the taxi but don't tell them **your** name.
- Sit behind the driver on the back seat and if you feel uneasy ask to be dropped off somewhere you know that is busy and well-lit.

Driving

- Make sure your car stays in good working order and try not to run out of petrol.
- Plan your route and, if possible, tell someone where you are going and how long you expect the journey to take before you leave.
- Think about what you'd do if you break down. For example, do you carry a mobile phone to use in an emergency? If it is

cold, it is a good idea to have a blanket and some warm clothes in case you have to wait for help to come.

- Try to park in busy, well-lit areas. If you park in the daytime, think about what the area will be like after dark.
- Keep valuables and personal possessions out of sight and doors locked. When you leave the car make sure you remove any valuables and lock the doors.
- Keep the doors locked whilst you are driving.

What to do if you are a victim of crime

Call the police as soon as you can.

- If you think you have been burgled when you get home **do not** go inside in case the intruder is still there. Instead call the police from a neighbour's phone and wait until they arrive.
- If you are **sure** the burglar has gone, you can go inside; but try not to touch anything and contact the police straight away.
- After the police have gone, make a list of missing items and contact your insurance company. If it asks for the crime reference number, you should be able to get it from the police the following day.
- If you are robbed in the street try to remember as much about it as you can: for example, what the thief looked like. Take the details of any witnesses.
- Change your locks if any keys have been taken.
- Cancel any stolen bank cards – the phone number should be on your bank statement or your bank's cash point.
- If your mobile phone is taken tell your network and the police so it can be cancelled immediately.

Victim support schemes

Being burgled or robbed on the street can be an upsetting experience. Victim support schemes give practical help and emotional support to people who have experienced crime. You can call the Victim Supportline on **0845 30 30 900** or get in touch with your local branch. Your local police station will have details or contact:

Victim Support (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

Cranmer House, 39 Brixton Road, London SW9 6DZ

Tel: 020 7735 9166 Web: www.victimsupport.org

Victim Support (Scotland)

15–23 Hardwell Close, Edinburgh EH8 9RX

Tel: 0131 668 4486 Web: www.victimsupportscotland.co.uk

Useful contacts

Age Concern

To find out where your local group is, call Age Concern on **0800 00 99 66**, web: www.ageconcern.org.uk or look in your phone book.

Crime prevention officer

A crime prevention officer can give you expert advice on making your home more secure. They can assess your needs for security devices and tell you how to get hold of them. Contact the crime prevention officer at your local police station for more information.

Help the Aged SeniorLink

For information on our Help the Aged Bogus Caller scheme contact:

Help the Aged SeniorLink

Freepost, Help the Aged SeniorLink

Tel: 0845 603 4576

Home improvement agencies

Home improvement agencies help older homeowners and private tenants to repair and improve their homes. In England contact:

Foundations

Bleaklow House, Howard Town Mill, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8HT
Tel: 01457 891 909 Web: wwwFOUNDATIONS.uk.com

In Northern Ireland contact:

Fold

Fold House, 3–6 Redburn Square, Hollywood, Co. Down BT18 9HZ
Tel: 028 9042 8314 Web: www.foldgroup.co.uk

In Scotland contact:

Care and Repair Forum Scotland

135 Buchanan Street, Suite 2.5, Glasgow G1 2JA
Tel: 0141 221 9879 Web: www.careandrepairsScotland.co.uk

In Wales contact:

Care and Repair Cymru

Norbury House, Norbury Road, Fairwater, Cardiff CF5 3AS
Tel: 029 2057 6286 Web: www.careandrepair.org.uk

The Home Office

The Home Office publishes three free booklets: *Be Safe, Be Secure: Your practical guide to crime reduction*; *How to beat the bogus caller*; and *A guide to home security*. Call 0870 241 4680 for copies.

Master Locksmiths Association

This is the professional body of locksmiths. You can obtain a free list of members by contacting:

Master Locksmiths Association

5d Great Central Way, Daventry NN11 3PZ
Tel: 0800 783 1498 Web: www.locksmiths.co.uk

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are self-help groups that work in partnership with the police, local councils and other agencies involved in community safety to prevent crime. They can offer valuable neighbourly help and advice. Ask your local crime prevention officer if there is a scheme in your area and, if not, why not help to set one up. You can also look online for your nearest Neighbourhood Watch scheme:
www.neighbourhoodwatch.net/nwlocal

Safe Partnership

Safe Partnership can provide free, practical and immediate home security to older people who have been burgled or are in fear of being burgled. To find out if there is a local scheme contact:

Safe Partnership

3 East Street, Wareham, Dorset BH20 4NN
Tel: 01929 551100 Web: www.safepartnership.org

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is a charity which specialises in personal safety. The Trust produces a range of guides and personal safety products.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust

National Centre for Personal Safety, Hampton House,
20 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TJ
Tel: 020 7091 0014 Web: www.suzylamplugh.org

Volunteer bureaux

Some volunteer bureaux can offer help with gardening. Look in your phone book to find your nearest bureau.

Security checklist

- Keep all windows and doors locked and bolted (where possible) whilst you are out. When you lock up at night, keep the keys to hand so that you can get out easily if you need to.
- Keep your keys in a safe place.
- Cancel milk and regular deliveries before going away.
- Leave some lights on when you go out at night.
- Don't keep large amounts of cash at home.
- When answering the door remember to:

Lock, stop, chain, check.

- Never let a stranger into your home unless you are confident that they are genuine. If in doubt keep them out.
- Take a few safety precautions when out and about.
- Speak to your local crime prevention officer or Neighbourhood Watch group about any worries.
- Remember: **crimes against older people are rare.**

Write down phone numbers of your local services here so they are handy if you need to check the identity of a doorstep caller:

Electricity

Local social services department

Gas

Local council

Water

Local police station

Telephone

If you are suspicious dial 999 and ask for the police

Cut out this page and pin it up

Help the Aged distributes over 3 million advice leaflets a year. This service is currently provided free of charge, thanks to the generosity of our supporters. If you found this leaflet useful and would like to make a donation, phone 020 7239 1983 quoting ref **IRT** or send a cheque or postal order, for the attention of Information Resources, to the address below.

February 2007

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Fighting for disadvantaged older people in the UK and overseas,
WE WILL:

COMBAT POVERTY wherever older people's lives are blighted by lack of money, and cut the number of preventable deaths from hunger, cold and disease

REDUCE ISOLATION so that older people no longer feel confined to their own home, forgotten or cut off from society

CHALLENGE NEGLECT to ensure that older people do not suffer inadequate health and social care, or the threat of abuse

DEFEAT AGEISM to ensure that older people are not ignored or denied the dignity and equality that are theirs by right

PREVENT FUTURE DEPRIVATION by improving prospects for employment, health and well-being so that dependence in later life is reduced

Head Office, 207–221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ
T 020 7278 1114 F 020 7278 1116
E info@helptheaged.org.uk www.helptheaged.org.uk

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