

# Hudson Life

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## Protect Yourself from Purse Snatchers

by Sherri Bevan Walsh, Summit County Prosecutor

The holidays are approaching and many of us will be spending time shopping and preparing for holiday gatherings. Women need to be extra careful because crimes such as purse snatchings often increase at this time of the year.

What can you do to avoid a purse snatching? The best advice I can give you is to consider NOT carrying a purse. Instead, use a small wallet or coin purse. You can hold your driver's license, a credit card or some cash. Place this small wal-

let or coin purse in a front coat pocket or front pants pocket. It is very rare for a robber to approach someone who is not carrying a purse and demand money.

If you feel that you must carry a purse, please consider the following tips to avoid a purse snatching:

1. Purse snatchers are looking for easy targets, such as women who are dangling their purse from their hand, walking with their head down, or are not paying attention and will be easily surprised. Always walk with confidence. Look to the left, to the right, and behind you to make it clear to snatchers that you will see them coming.

2. Hold your purse firmly over your shoulder and make it obvious that you have a tight grip on your purse. Do not put your purse strap over your neck. Although a purse placed over your neck will make it more difficult for the purse snatcher, it can result in you being choked and knocked to the ground if a robber grabs your purse.

3. Be aware that women also steal purses! Women tend to be in fear of a "man" who may be following them, but we rarely pay attention to a woman who may be following us in a parking lot. Almost half of the purse snatching cases my office has prosecuted have involved



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women purse snatchers. If you think a man or a woman is following you, return to the store to find someone to walk you to your car.

4. Be aware that most purse snatchings occur in broad daylight in busy parking lots of stores and malls. Always pay *just* as much attention during the day as you would at night.

5. Be suspicious of cars driving past you slowly when you are walking with your purse. Many purse snatchers grab purses from moving vehicles. If your purse is grabbed by someone in a car, let go of it immediately! If you attempt to hang on to your purse, you could be dragged by the car and could be seriously injured.

If you follow these tips and make it obvious that you are paying attention to everyone around you, it is unlikely you will become a victim of a purse snatching. One final piece of advice: If a purse snatcher does try to take your purse, do not fight with him or her to protect your purse. As a woman, I know how protective we are of our purses. If someone grabs at our purse, our natural reaction is to struggle to hang onto it because we do not want our purse to be taken. Unfortunately, the purse snatcher usually will get the purse anyway and now the victim is injured. It is never worth risking your safety to fight for your purse.

If you have any questions, suggestions for future topics, or belong to a group that would be interested in hearing a crime safety presentation from Prosecutor Walsh, please call or write to: Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh, Summit County Prosecutor's Office, 53 University Ave., Akron, OH, 44308. ∞