

# Necklace that TEXTS your friends

And other clever devices to keep us safe now we're out at night

**T**HE murder of Sarah Everard last month has left many women more nervous than ever about going out alone after dark — though after lockdown, no one wants to feel trapped at home.

So should you carry a personal attack alarm? Is a colour spray more effective? And could you be prosecuted for carrying a metal pen to use in self-defence?

Ex-police officer Steve Hellier, who runs a personal protection company called Aldermans, says your first focus should be on prevention.

He recommends sticking with other people whenever possible, and having a 'buddy system', so one member of the group is nominated to stay sober enough to watch out for others. You should also tell friends where you go and who you might meet.

If you are approached by someone and feel unsafe, make as much fuss and noise as you can. 'Scream at the top of your lungs,' says Steve, 'and fight like hell.'

He suggests carrying a personal alarm attached to a keyring or belt. The best way to use an attack alarm is to hold it close to the attacker's face, then drop it by their feet and run to a busy area if you can. To attract attention, shout 'call the police!' or 'I'm being attacked'.

Steve warns that any potential 'weapon' you carry in self-defence needs to have an innocent use. Pepper spray is no longer sold in the UK but you'll find adverts online for reinforced metal pens advertised as being strong enough to break glass if you are trapped in a car. You could still end up in trouble with the police if you use them in self-defence, though Steve says no one could argue with your decision to carry an ordinary (if robust) metal pen.

We asked Steve to rate some personal protection devices...

## CHARM ALARM

Invisiwear pendant, £110, [invisiwear.com](http://invisiwear.com)

A GOLD-plated pendant (see picture above) that you wear on a chain around your neck or on a bracelet, which has a hidden button on the back. Pair it with the Invisiwear app (via Bluetooth) and input the names and numbers of five friends/family.

Push it twice and the charm will text these contacts, telling them you need help and giving your GPS location, saying 'if you are unable to contact XX, please send help to their location'.

**EXPERT VERDICT:** This is discreet, but you need to wear it every time you go out — and always have your phone with you, as it uses the phone's GPS tracker. A premium plan (an additional



Pendant power: The necklace can send an alert to family

by Louise Atkinson

£20 per month) will link you with a dedicated security responder.

**MY VERDICT:** This is costly and you can't recharge or replace the battery, so it has a limited life (one to two years). On the plus side, I wouldn't be likely to set it off accidentally. **3/5**

## KEEP TRACK

Cheetah Personal GPS tracker, £99.99, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

A KEY fob that's rechargeable, with an SOS button which texts and phones up to three contacts in turn until one answers. A two-way speaker in the device allows you to communicate without using your phone.

**MY VERDICT:** Not likely to be set off accidentally, and suitable for children and the elderly. **4/5**

The tracker has a SIM card that links to a phone app called Locoate (it also has a fall detection alert useful for the elderly or infirm) and the option of geo-fencing, which triggers an alarm if the wearer strays or is taken outside a set area.

**EXPERT VERDICT:** A belt-and-braces device ideal for group nights out and awayday trips.

**MY VERDICT:** Expensive but thorough. All options covered. **5/5**

## MAKE A NOISE

Police Approved Personal Alarm With Torch, £5.24, [nrshealthcare.co.uk](http://nrshealthcare.co.uk)

A SMALL keyring torch with a 128-decibel alarm when you pull

## RED ALERT

Farbgel red dye colour spray, £10.15, [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

A MINI-spray can of red dye which, sprayed on an attacker (aim for the face or hands), is hard to wash off, making them easy to identify if caught.

**EXPERT VERDICT:** Paint can make an attacker think twice but in fact the dye isn't that hard to remove and you're relying on the police to search for the offender before they manage to do so.

**MY VERDICT:** Wouldn't be enough to make me feel safe. **2/5**

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someone to hack away at her marked her out as a victim.

A victim of the belief that a woman who no longer looks young and beautiful is a woman of no worth. A victim of the idea that ageing is an ugly thing rather than a potentially proud manifestation of having lived a long and productive life. And a victim of the curse of social media and the Photoshopped selfie, which even oldies post these days on their Facebook pages to goodwink themselves and us.

That's the fury. The fretfulness is to do with the fact that Susan is now 71, a decade older, and has something called atrial fibrillation, which affects the rhythm of her heart and makes undergoing any kind of operation a bigger deal.

The truth is I hoped that, by now, she would have accepted her age and the face that goes with it.

How wrong I was. Her latest excuse is her droopy eyelids, which will now be tightened and lifted.

Sometimes I wonder how

I've reached my own great fillers, other than in my teeth. And the only place I've had Botox is in the sole of my right foot — to treat a movement disorder called dystonia, which affected my ability to walk and was mercifully cured by regular jabs of botulinum toxin.

But my sister, as always when I visit, she's not looking too battered. And she is cock-a-hoop. One month later, I admit that having proper eyelids really does make her look a lot better. But then comes a troubling moment. I catch her prodding her undereye bags and lamenting how her lower facelift has worn off. That's the thing about trying to hold back the years — it's a never-ending battle.

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