

## What are personal alarms?

A personal alarm is a noisemaker, usually battery-operated, that makes a loud, piercing noise when it is set off. Lung powered whistles, often called “rape whistles” also fall into this noise-maker category.

## Why are personal alarms over-rated?

Believing that someone will come to your rescue when you blow a whistle or set off a siren is a wonderful fairy tale. Don't fall for it. Not only are noise-makers and rape whistles ineffective at deterring crime, they are likely to do more harm than good, for several reasons.

Counting on an alarm to summon aid means that you are depending on someone else to come forth to rescue you. That is, you are betting your life on the hope that someone will hear the alarm, and will respond, and will be capable of stopping the attack. That's a lot of 'ifs' that are out of your control.

The act of activating the alarm or blowing a whistle can take anywhere from 2 to 20 seconds, but the outcome of an attack is usually decided within the first 8 to 10 seconds. So, if the noise doesn't work, you may be out of time, the loser, before you can try other options.

Screaming can sometimes be effective, since the human voice has an impact that is quite different from a mechanical sound. But instead of just making noise, you could be doing much more constructive things that would decrease your likelihood of victimization, such as running away, kicking, striking effective blows, counterattacking with pepper spray, or reaching for a weapon.