

Power to the Pepper (Spray)!

by Susan Bartelstone, Crime Prevention Specialist

YOUR LIFE IS
WORTH FIGHTING
FOR!

NO ONE HAS THE
RIGHT TO RAPE OR
ASSAULT OR
ABUSE YOU! EVER!

Consider carrying a whistle or alarm.



Pre-set your cell phone to dial 911!

Thinking about getting Pepper Spray or Mace for protection? Before you buy that canister, here are some tips.

A GOOD DEFENSIVE OPTION. Defense sprays have been around for over 25 years, primarily used by law enforcement and emergency service personnel. They're inexpensive, easy to carry (and conceal), and simple to use. While not a panacea against crime, when offered within the context of proper training and awareness, they enable people feel safer, lead less restrictive lives, and can be a real lifesaver!

LAWS AND REGULATIONS. The laws and regulations for the possession and use of defense sprays vary from state to state. Some require a training class or a license while others require nothing particular. Make sure to check with the police or the District Attorney's office for the requirements in your area.

In all 50 states, however, it's illegal to carry a defense spray onto an airplane and some airlines won't even permit them in checked baggage. If you're planning on taking yours with you, it's best to speak with each airline you'll be using before you fly.

Caution: Don't develop a false sense of confidence or security because you're carrying a defense spray. Always use caution and common sense.

PEPPER vs. MACE. Two types of defense sprays are available commercially: tear gas-based (Mace is one brand) and red (cayenne) pepper-based solutions. Manufacturers of both types claim they'll disable attackers without causing any permanent injury or harm.

Pepper spray is a red pepper-based solution (also known as oleoresin capsicum or OC) and there are many different brands. Red pepper is an inflammatory agent and causes temporary blindness, uncontrollable coughing, gagging, and sometimes even vomiting. OCs work well on dogs and other animals and are often used by postal workers. Another OC product on the market is pepper foam which is better for indoor use. OC's usually take 2-3 seconds to be effective and are considered by many experts to be more efficient

The effects of both types of spray last anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes and can be used successfully from a distance of up to 12 feet. The farther the distance you spray from, the better, since it minimizes having the spray back up on you. Most experts agree, however, that Pepper Spray takes effect quicker than Mace (usually within 2-3 seconds). I personally prefer the pepper-based sprays for that reason.

Both tear gas and pepper-based sprays have merits and limitations. My top 10 tips for using defense sprays most effectively are listed below.

10 TIPS FOR USING DEFENSE SPRAYS



✓ **Take a yearly Self Defense Course**

Check out the Safety Store on Crime Prevention 101.com for pepper spray and other protection devices.

Sometimes nothing can be done to prevent an undesirable outcome in a crime situation. Submitting to an attacker, with or without resistance, is always a valid choice. Whatever you do to survive is the correct response.

The term "he/him" when describing an attacker is used solely for expediency. Attackers can be women as well as men, and boys/girls as well as adults

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1. Carry your defense spray unobtrusively in your hand or pocket, ready to use. You don't want to fumble around in an emergency.
2. **Use the important advantage of surprise.** If confronted, never alert the assailant that you have a defense spray by holding it out in front of you. Extend your empty hand to delineate a boundary and yell loudly for the assailant to back off. If he continues to approach, spray immediately and without warning.
3. Aim first for the eyes and face then the clothes and upper torso so the fumes will linger.
4. Use the whole canister and make sure the spray has taken effect before you try to run away.
5. Ask about the nozzle on the spray you buy; different types have different advantages. Make sure the brand you purchase comes with instructions and a child-proof cap if you have kids. Buy **pepper foam** for indoor use and **pepper spray** for outdoor use.

Know the merits and limitations if you decide to use this option.

6. Practice beforehand is critical so buy an extra canister to rehearse with (outdoors).
7. Replace the spray canister every year because it can lose pressure over time. Use the old one for target practice.
8. **IMPORTANT: Both pepper and tear gas sprays have little effect on someone who is drunk, high on drugs, behaving erratically, or enraged.** In fact, they tend to make a person in those states even more violent. If you have time, try to evaluate the attacker's mental state first before spraying. ALWAYS be prepared that the spray might not work as desired.
9. **IMPORTANT: Neither pepper nor tear gas spray will necessarily cause an assailant to drop like a dead roach you've just sprayed with Raid.** The person may only be weakened but still standing, punching and/or moving around. A weakened attacker may give you a good opening for escape, however, so learn how to press that advantage.
10. Be prepared to take further defensive action in case the spray isn't as effective as you'd want. Take a 4-6-week Self Defense course to be prepared for any eventuality.

For more information about Defense Sprays:

Pepper Sprays: Practical Self-Defense for Anyone, Anywhere, Doug Lamb (Paladin Press, www.paladin-press.com)

Beyond Pepper Spray: The Complete Guide to the Chemical Agents, Delivery Systems, and Protective Masks, Michael E. Conti (Paladin Press, www.paladin-press.com)