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No place to hide

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It's always been a long-standing thing in movies that criminals ?wipe down? the crime scene so they don't leave finger prints.

The truth is most criminals aren't that thoughtful. If you've just done something in haste, that may result in you going to prison, most people who have just committed a serious crime leave the scene quickly, and don't resort to housekeeping while putting their loot in over-sized duffle bags.

For starters, most criminals don't conveniently have a handkerchief in their pocket, and after committing a burglary and rifling through people's private belongs, a criminal won't remember all that he touched in the first place.

I've seen criminal cases where people have been convicted of a serious crime based on a single fingerprint.

The problem with fingerprint technology is you have to have a suspect in order to match a print.

Unless the guy has committed other crimes, has been fingerprinted, and that print is in a database, you still need to find the perpetrator to match that finger print with to ensure you've got the right guy.

If the guy never commits another crime, there's a good chance he will never be caught using fingerprint technology.

However, it's a new era in forensic crime technology.

In the past few months alone, several arrests have been made in several long-cold murder cases in the U.S.

Several of the crimes were committed over 40 years ago. One murder investigation went cold decades ago, but was passed on to a new generation of investigators resulting in the arrest of a man in a case that happened over 50 years ago.

This past week, police in Edmonton arrested a man for the sexual assault of a 15-year-old girl that happened in 1981. The suspect is now 65-years-old. I'm sure he figured he had gotten away with it, but this guy is going to spend his golden years peering out from behind a set of bars.

DNA evidence is pretty damning if it happens to be your DNA left at the scene of a crime. DNA profiling has only been around since 1984, and it took a while for police and related agencies to figure it all out.

The good thing about old cold cases, is that if police agencies did their due diligence, evidence collected at a crime scene years ago can still be used for DNA tests during present day investigations. If you left evidence behind four decades ago, it still may come back to haunt you.

DNA profiling is too complicated to print an explanation here. Even after reading much information, I don't really understand how it all works.

However, it is known that your DNA is unique to you, so if yours shows up at a crime scene, your chances for a successful alibi are greatly reduced.

Many of the recently solved cases happened because investigators found similarities of DNA in public databases to that of the sample they had for evidence. Family members share certain markers that indicate that a close relative may be the one they are looking for.

Investigators can work from this evidence to narrow down the search for a suspect.

In the case of the Edmonton sexual assault, police said they ?used investigative genetic genealogy, which compares a crime scene DNA sample with profiles in public commercial databases.?

While all this hard police work is very valuable and well done, it does raise the possibility, and it has been suggested, that people should volunteer their DNA to a database.

It is already done in some military forces to replace old style dog tags in the event a body is recovered and identification is difficult. However, does the military hang on to your DNA profile indefinitely or is it destroyed once you leave?

I'm not sure I want my DNA in some database. A lot of people give the argument, that if you've done nothing wrong, why should you care if your DNA is on a list somewhere?

The counter-argument is, if I haven't done anything wrong, why should my DNA be in a database like I'm a suspect?

It has been common over the past few years for people to have DNA testing while doing genealogical research to find out their family history.

Personally, I'm not sure the results given by these commercial companies are 100 per cent accurate as too many people are being told they have a relation to some pretty obscure and unlikely ancestors. I think sometimes the researchers at the mass-produced genealogical sites fill in a blank off the top of their head before going out for lunch.

Either way, once you submit a DNA sample, it's out there on record and may come back to haunt you later, if you haven't lived your life the best way possible.