

Keep Your Family Safe from Firearm Injury

American Academy of Pediatrics and Center to Prevent Handgun Violence

One out of five pediatricians nationwide has treated a young gunshot victim.

American Academy of Pediatrics, 1994

A Message from Your Pediatrician

Whether you have an infant or a teenager, keeping a gun at home poses a very real danger to your family. As a parent, you are already familiar with safety measures such as seat belts, bicycle helmets, window guards, and locking up medicines and poisons. This brochure provides easy steps you can take now to reduce the risk of gun injury—steps that can save you and your family considerable pain later.

The safest thing is to not have a gun in your home, especially not a handgun. If you already own one or plan to keep one in your home, please read this brochure very carefully. It may be vital to your family's health and safety.

Simplest Steps that Can Save Lives

A gun at home is 43 times more likely to be used to kill (including suicides) a family member or friend than to kill in self-defense.¹

If You Keep a Gun, Empty It Out, Lock It Up!

- Always keep your gun unloaded and locked up.
- Lock and store bullets in a separate location.
- Make sure children don't have access to the keys.
- Ask police for advice on safe storage and gun locks.
- The best way to reduce gun risks is to remove the gun from your home.

Even If You Don't Own a Gun...

- Talk with your children about the risk of gun injury outside the home in places where they may visit and play.
- Tell your children to steer clear of guns when they are in the homes of their friends.
- Speak with the parents of your children's friends to find out if they keep a gun at home.
- If they do, urge them to empty it out and lock it up.
- Pass along this brochure to them.

Recognizing And Reducing The Risks To Your Family

Toddlers and Young Children

- Because even the most well-behaved children are curious by nature and will eagerly explore their environment, the safest thing is to not keep a gun at home.

- Explain to your children that guns are dangerous and that children should never touch guns.
- Tell your children that gun violence on TV and in the movies is not real. Explain that in real life, children are hurt and killed with guns.
- Children gradually learn and often forget and test the rules, so periodically repeat the message to stay away from guns.

Preteens and Teenagers

- Talk to your children about ways to solve arguments and fights without guns or violence.
- Keep in mind that teenagers don't always follow the rules. Also remember that preteens and teens are attracted to guns as symbols of power. Since you cannot always count on teens to stay away from guns, you have to keep guns away from them.
- Depressed preteens and teens commit suicide with guns more often than with any other method. No longer children and not yet adults, they may consider suicide if they're sad, angry, not being taken seriously, or if they feel ignored.
- Be extremely cautious about allowing children to participate in shooting activities.

Important Numbers

If you or your teenager is troubled or having personal problems, you can call:

1-800-448-3000

Boys Town National Hotline

To receive free information on how you and your family can work to prevent violence in your community, call:

1-800-WE-PREVENT

Crime Prevention Coalition

The above numbers are included with the permission of Boys Town and the National Crime Prevention Council, Secretariat to the Crime Prevention Coalition.

For more information, write to:

Center to Prevent Handgun Violence
1225 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 1100
Washington D.C. 20005

1. Kellerman AL and Reay DT, 1986.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

American Academy
of Pediatrics



The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 57,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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