

National Firearm Facts:

- Firearms are second to motor vehicles as the leading cause of death from injury in the U.S. (Public Health Data Watch, August 2000, Public Health - Seattle & King County)
- 60.9% of firearms used in school-associated homicides or suicides came from the perpetrator's home or from a friend or relative of the perpetrator. (Source of Firearms Used by Students in School - Associated Violent Deaths - United States, 1992-1999, MMWR Weekly, March 7, 2003/52(09); 169-172)
- Nearly 170,000 children and youth lived in households with loaded and unlocked firearms in 2002, according to researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "It is important to identify, implement and evaluate effective methods to prevent firearm-related morbidity and mortality – from counseling youth and adults with depressive symptoms, to evaluating firearm safety technologies, to a variety of safe storage options," the researchers conclude.

Safe Storage of Guns & Ammunition Reduces Risk of Firearm Injury Risk to Youth

Unloading and locking guns and ammunition in separate locations is associated with a significant decrease in firearm injuries in homes with children and teenagers, according to a study by researchers from the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center of the University of Washington.

TIPS FOR PARENTS:

It is normal for young children to be curious and explore in drawers, cabinets and closets. They are also fascinated with firearms. A recent study showed that three out of four children who are 8 to 12 years old will handle a firearm they find. About half of those will pull the trigger.

The safe storage of firearms in a locked location can reduce the risk of deaths, injuries and suicides involving children and teens.

Preteens and teens may be attracted to firearms and see firearms as symbols of power.

1. Tips for safe firearm storage

Safe storage of firearms works to protect everyone in the home. Here are suggestions to keep your family safer.

- Store firearms unloaded and locked.
- To properly store firearms, use a gun safe, gun lock box, a trigger lock or a chamber lock.

- Store and lock ammunition in a separate place.
- Remove firearms from your home if you have a depressed or suicidal family member.
- Ask family and friends to use these safe storage steps.
- Many guns are stored unsafely. Locking up firearms can greatly reduce unwanted access and safe lives. The LOK-IT-UP campaign is a public awareness program encouraging the safe storage of firearms.

Why Lock Up Your Firearm?

- Why should you buy a device to lock your firearm? Because by locking your gun you can help:

Prevent Children from Being Injured or Killed

Each year, about 11 Washington children are hospitalized and one child dies from unintentional shootings. In addition, each year about 12 Washington children are hospitalized and 21 children die from intentional shootings, including self-inflicted, homicides, and assaults.

Prevent Crimes from Being Committed With Your Gun

Thousands of handguns are stolen each year in the U.S. Many are used to commit other crimes.

Prevent Depressed Teens from Committing Suicide

A recent study of adolescent suicides found that over half were carried out with guns from the adolescent's home.

Keep Children Gun-Free

In 2004, about 3% of Washington students in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades - about 7,000 students - reported carrying a gun at least once in the past 30 days.

During the 2005 - 2006 school year, the Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction reported 78 incidents involving a firearm on school premises, transportation systems, or school facilities.

Storing firearms safely can reduce the risk of injuries, deaths, and suicides involving children and teens.

2. ASK the question: “If you have a firearm in your home, is it stored locked and unloaded?”

Before you send your child to someone's house, ask if firearms in the home are stored unloaded and locked. Ask if the ammunition is stored separately. Ask about shotguns and rifles too, not just handguns.

If you have doubts about the safety of someone else's home, invite the children to play at your home instead.

Tips to make asking easier

Many of us feel awkward asking other people how they handle firearm safety. Here are some tips to help:

- Ask about firearms along with other things you discuss before your child goes to play at someone's home such as seat belt use, allergies and animals.
- Present your concerns with respect.
- Work through groups. Introduce the ASK concept through your child's preschool, childcare or local PTA.

Finding the right words can be hard. Here's a start.

- “I don't mean any disrespect, but knowing how curious my child can be, I feel I have to ask this question.”
- “I hope you don't mind me asking if you have a firearm in your home and if it is properly stored?”
- “Mom, Dad, _____, this is awkward for me and I mean no disrespect. I am concerned Susie will find one of the firearms in your home when we visit. Do you keep them locked up with the ammunition stored separately?”

3. Talk with your child

- Talk with your children about the risk of firearm injury in places they may visit or play.
- Teach your child if he/she finds a firearm to leave it alone and let an adult know right away.

Additional Information can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.nrahq.org/education/guide.asp>

<http://www.nrahq.org/safety/eddie/infoparents.asp>