

Guns in the Home

Children and teens are at the greatest risk of unintentional deaths, injuries and suicides from guns.

- Less than half of U.S. families with children and guns store their guns unloaded and locked away.¹
- Each year in Washington state, 25 children are hospitalized and four to five die due to unintentional gun injuries.
- Most of these shootings occur in or around the home.
- A recent study showed that three-quarters of 8- to 12-year-olds will handle a gun they find. About half of those will pull the trigger, even though 90 percent said they'd been taught about gun safety in the past.²

Tips for talking with your child

It is normal for young children to be curious and explore in drawers, cabinets and closets.

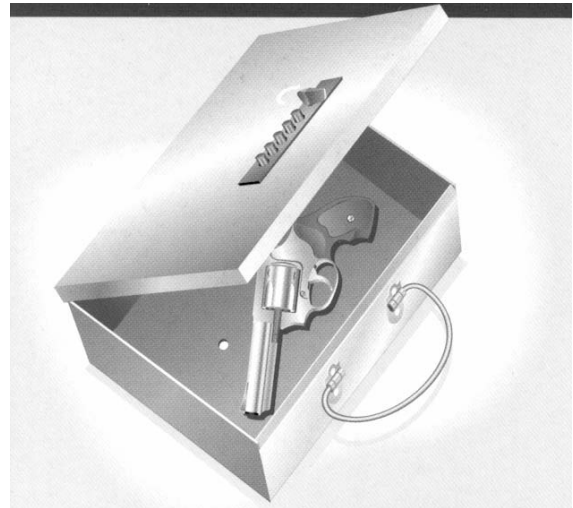
- Talk with your children about the risk of gun injury in places they may visit or play.
- Teach your child that if she finds a gun to leave it alone and to let an adult know right away.
- Talk with your child about guns and violence. Let her know that strong feelings like fear and anger can be expressed without using weapons.

Tips for safe gun storage

Safe storage of guns works to protect everyone in the home. Use this checklist:

- ❑ Store guns unloaded and locked.
- ❑ Store and lock bullets in a separate place.
- ❑ Use a gun safe, locked box, trigger or chamber lock to store guns.
- ❑ Avoid locking devices that use keys if possible. Children often know where keys are kept.
- ❑ Ask family and friends to use these safe storage steps.
- ❑ Remove guns from your home if you have a depressed or suicidal family member.

For more information and a discount coupon for a lock box, call 1-877-LOK-IT-UP, (1-877-565-4887) or visit www.lokitup.org.



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Ask other parents about safe gun storage³

Before you send your child to someone's house, ask if guns in the home are stored unloaded and locked. Ask if the bullets are 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 gun safety. Here are some tips to help:

- Ask about guns along with other things you discuss before your child goes to play at someone's home, such as seat belt use, allergies and animals.
- Work through groups. Share information on safe gun storage with your child's preschool, childcare or local PTA. See resources at the bottom of the page for materials to help you.
- Present your concerns with respect (see the following examples).

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 gun 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 guns in your home when we visit. Do you keep them locked up with the bullets stored separately?"

¹"Guns in the Family: Firearm Storage Patterns in U.S. Homes with Children," RAND, Doc # RB-4535, 2001.

²"Seeing is Believing: What Do Boys Do When They Find a Real Gun?" Pediatrics Vol. 107 No. 6 June 2001, pp. 1247-1250.

³ASK—Asking Saves Kids. The ASK campaign is sponsored by PAX: The Movement to End Gun Violence, in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The "asking about guns" information was developed by the ASK campaign sponsored by PAX. Revised with permission by Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Children's Resource Line (206) 987-2500 or (866) 987-2500 *toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho*
- Your Child's Health Care Provider
- The Safe Storage Web site: www.lokitup.org
- For a discount coupon for a lock box, call 1-877-LOK-IT-UP, (1-877-565-4887).
- For an ASK Parent Help Kit that includes tips on how to talk about the subject, sample answers to defensive reactions and ideas for community support, go to www.askingsaveskids.com or call (212) 983-8705.

Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Please call Marketing Communications at (206) 987-5205.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health care provider.