

Safe Firearm Storage: Key Messages

Note: These are messages Seattle Children's has chosen to convey based on research and experiences with community and hospital based safe firearm storage program work. Messages can and should be communicated in different ways depending on the venue and/or communication vehicle.

Our overarching message is positive, neutral, focused on safety and specific to adults who care for children and teens: We are committed to keeping kids safe. Safe firearm storage protects children and teens, reduces the risk of firearm injuries and saves lives.

What is safe firearm storage?

- Safe firearm storage means keeping a firearm unloaded and secured using a lock box, safe, or other locked storage space designed to prevent access and use from someone other than the intended ownerⁱ.

How do I store firearms safely?

- The safest way to store firearms is to use the *Triple Safe method*. *Triple Safe* is storing the (1) firearm unloaded, (2) locked up and (3) the ammunition locked up in a separate location.
- Use a gun safe, lock box or trigger lock to secure and store firearms. There are many safe storage options available to choose what works for your needs.
- Make sure that kids and anyone other than the intended owner don't know lock combinations or lock box key hiding places. If possible, avoid locking devices that only use keys because children and teens often know where keys are keptⁱⁱ.
- Role model responsible handling and safe storage of firearms. Always lock up firearms, even if a child or teen has had safety training.

Who is at risk for firearm-related injury?

- Youth (15 to 24) are at the highest risk of firearm deathⁱⁱⁱ. Nearly 1,300 children and teens (ages 0 to 17) die each year from firearm-related events within the United States^{iv}.
- People experiencing suicidality. Most (75%) firearm deaths are suicides in Washington State^v.

Why should I focus on safe firearm storage?

- Practicing safe firearm storage is a proven way to keep kids safe from firearm suicide and unintentional shootings.
- When firearms are securely stored, suicide by firearm is reduced by 78% and unintentional shootings are reduced by 85%^{vi,vii}.
- Firearms in the home are 43 times more likely to be involved in a fatal unintentional shooting, homicide or suicide than to be used in self-defense^{viii}.
- Firearms are like other potentially dangerous household items, like prescription medicines or toxic cleaning products, that we recommend storing securely and out of reach^{ix}.
- Hidden is not safe. Kids are naturally curious and they may be tempted to play with a firearm if they find one. Teaching a child about firearms and telling them not to touch a firearm is not enough. If there is a firearm in the home, locking up firearms is the most effective way to keep firearms out of the hands of young people^x.

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- Storing firearms in a lock box or safe can prevent theft, a common source of firearms used by criminals^{xi}.

When is safe firearm storage not enough?

- If a family member is depressed, suicidal or is abusing drugs or alcohol, temporarily removing firearms from your home may save their life.
- Ask family and friends to use safe storage steps if they own firearms.

Where can I find additional resources?

- [Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center](#) shares places throughout Washington that offer temporary, voluntary firearm storage^{xii}.
- [Safer Homes, Suicide Aware](#), offers firearms safety and suicide awareness trainings and resources.
- [Lock It Up](#) works with firearm retailers to offer discounted prices on gun safes and lock boxes.
- [Project ChildSafe](#) has helpful resources for firearm storage options beyond the cable lock, trigger lock, and lock box that we offer.
- [Seattle Children’s](#) hosts safe firearm storage education and giveaway events and shares information on safe firearm storage for parents and caregivers.

ⁱ (Washington State Legislature, n.d.)

ⁱⁱ Baxley & Miller, 2006

ⁱⁱⁱ WISQARS, 2017

^{iv} Fowler et al., 2017

^v Washington Healthy Youth Survey, 2018

^{vi} Grossman et al., 2005

^{vii} Clearvue Health, 2019

^{viii} Butler et al., 2020

^{ix} Massachusetts Medical Society

^x Shenassa et al., 2004

^{xi} Hemenway et al., 2017

^{xii} Harborview Injury Prevention & Research Center