

KEEPING KIDS SAFE WHEN GUNS ARE IN THE HOME

Guns are in more than 1/3 of all U. S. households and that is why it is important to talk to children about the potential danger of guns, and what to do if they find one.

Tragedies occur on a daily basis involving unlocked firearms that are easily accessible to young people. If you choose to keep a gun in your home, the safety of your child, and the children that may visit your home, is your responsibility. It is also your responsibility to learn, practice, and teach gun safety to your children.

Parents of teenagers are less likely to store firearms safely. This is a big concern since most firearms injuries happen to teens. Most guns involved in self-inflicted and unintentional firearm injuries (suicides and accidents) came either from the victim's home or the home of a relative or friend. Teens are at greater risk of attempting suicide with a gun. More than 90% of suicide attempts with a gun are deadly.

GUN STORAGE

Without any exaggeration, the way a gun is stored can make a difference between life and death. Children have a natural curiosity and their fascination with guns is huge. All parents must take common sense steps to protect children and avoid accidents. Little hands can hold a gun and little fingers can pull a trigger.

To ensure the safest environment for your family the following steps should be used in safely storing guns and ammunition.

- Assure no unauthorized person has access to your gun(s).
- Purchase and use Trigger Locks or other childproof devices that render the gun inoperable.
- Take the ammunition out of the gun.
- Place ammunition in a locked location, separate from guns, and out of sight and reach of children.
- Hiding a gun is not enough, store unloaded guns in a locked gun cabinet, safe, gun vault, or locked closet.
- Keep gun storage keys away from the "every day" keys and in a secure place.
- Lock up gun-cleaning supplies, which are often poisonous.
- When handling or cleaning a gun, never leave the gun unattended.

SAFE GUN HANDLING

- Do not allow untrained or unauthorized persons to handle guns.
- Always handle fire arms as if they are loaded.
- Keep guns pointed in a safe direction.
- Never point a gun at someone.
- Never play with guns like they are a toy.
- Teach children the basics of gun safety.

BB AND NON-POWDER GUNS

Non-powder guns, such as ball-bearing (BB) guns, pellet guns, and paintball guns are not regulated by the government, but can cause serious injury and death.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends that children under the age of 16 not use high-velocity BB guns or pellet guns. And these guns should only be used under the supervision of an adult. Children who have a BB gun, or are likely to come into contact with one, must never point it at anyone, including themselves.

Paintball guns are known to cause traumatic eye injuries, so kids need to wear protective eye gear. Children should not put caps for toy guns in their pockets because the caps can ignite due to friction and cause burns and loud noises that can damage hearing.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN FANTASY AND REALITY

If you allow your children to play with toy guns make sure the toy gun looks like a toy. Make sure your children also know the difference between a toy gun and a real gun. Tell your children that guns used to create movies or on a video game screen are toys. Make them absolutely aware that BB guns, air guns, and firearms (rifles, pistols, shot guns, etc.) are not toys.

IF A CHILD SEES A GUN WHAT SHOULD THEY DO

The National Rifle Association's "Eddie Eagle Gun Safe Rules For Children," teaches that if a child sees a gun:

1) STOP! 2) DON'T TOUCH 3) LEAVE THE AREA 4) TELL AN ADULT

It is particularly important to teach children to leave the area to avoid being harmed by someone who doesn't know not to touch the gun.

PRACTICE WHAT YOU TEACH

Ultimately, you set the guidelines for your children's behavior. Once you are comfortable with storage and handling procedures at home, insist that they be honored at all times. Follow the rules you set for your children. Make sure that what you teach and what you do are the same.

RESOURCES TO USE & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Disease Control and Prevention (Non-fatal and fatal firearms-related injuries)

(<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrht/mm4845a1.htm>)

Kids Health (http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/home/gun_safety.htm)

National Rifle Association (<http://www.nrahq.org/safety/eddie>) (800) 231-0752)

American Academy of Pediatrics Injury Prevention Program (www.healthykids.org)