

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

to stop firearm violence

In your home, are there any

- children or teens?
- people who have dementia or other cognitive impairments?
- people who have a problem with drugs or drinking?
- people who think about harming themselves or others?
- firearms?

# IF YOU HAVE FIREARMS AT HOME, YOU CAN TAKE STEPS TO AVOID HARM.

## 1 Weigh the risks and benefits

**Know the responsibilities of safe gun ownership** and think about whether having firearms in your home now is right for you and for everyone else who spends time there.

## 2 Store firearms safely

**Storing guns safely means keeping them unloaded when not in use and secured from unauthorized access with a locking device.** Keep the keys or combinations for locking devices away from those who shouldn't have them.

## 3 Recognize increased risk

**Guns in your home can be especially dangerous if you or someone else at home is going through a time of crisis or has risk factors for gun injury or death.** Consider temporarily storing guns away from home or safely disposing of guns if someone in the home is at risk.

## 4 Take action

If you are worried about your safety or someone else's when a gun is present, **reach out to your health care provider, local law enforcement, or emergency services.** By keeping guns out of the wrong hands, you're helping keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

# 1 Weigh the risks and benefits

Having a gun in the home is a safety risk, and a risk that changes with circumstances.

When thinking about risk, think about anything that's different in your home since a gun was first brought there.

Maybe you've had a child, or maybe someone in your home has been thinking of harming himself.

**Carefully consider the current circumstances in your home and decide if having a gun at this time is right for you and right for everyone else who spends time there.**

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**If you answer yes to any of the following questions, you or someone in your home could be in increased danger of gun injury or death.**

**Ask yourself:**

**Am I at risk for gun injury? Is anyone else in my home at risk?**

**Are any of the guns in my home handled irresponsibly or stored unsafely?**

**Can anyone in my home who shouldn't have access to a gun get their hands on one?**



# 2 Store firearms safely

Safe gun storage is important for keeping guns out of the wrong hands. The safest way to store your guns is unloaded and definitely secured with a locking device.

If you have kids at home, assume that they know where the guns are kept. Securing all guns with a locking device and securing the keys and codes to these devices helps keep kids and other unauthorized users safe.

**The locking device that's right for you depends on the type and intended use of the gun you're securing. For example, if you're keeping a gun in your home for self-defense, you might find a lock box that you can quickly open with a code or using fingerprint technology to be most appropriate.**

You can choose from a variety of locking devices, including:

**trigger  
locks**

**cable  
locks**

**lock  
boxes**

**gun  
safes**


Locking and safe storage devices can be purchased where firearms are sold, including at gun stores, gun ranges, and sporting goods stores. Cable locks and lock boxes are often most affordable, and some police departments have programs to distribute these types of locking devices for free.

# 3 Recognize risk factors

If there are guns in your home, remember that some people are at higher risk for gun injury.

**If you or someone in your home is at high risk or is going through a crisis, decreasing access to guns could be lifesaving.**

**People at increased risk include:**



- Children and teens
- People with cognitive impairment
- People who misuse drugs or alcohol
- People experiencing suicidal thoughts

# 4 Take action

When someone in crisis has access to a gun, he or she is at higher risk of injury or death. This includes when someone is having thoughts of suicide or thoughts of hurting someone else.

**Don't hesitate to get help when you or someone you know is at extreme risk of gun injury. You can reach out to your health care provider, mental health services, local law enforcement, or visit an emergency department.**

Take action to prevent tragedy. Reducing access to guns by storing them outside the home, even temporarily, can be an important step. Check to see what's permitted where you live. You might be able to ask a gun retailer or range, a family member, or a friend to hold your guns for safe keeping. In some states a judge can have guns temporarily removed from persons in crisis. Local law enforcement and your health care provider can tell you more about the options in your area.

**105**

Americans died by firearm per day on average in 2016.<sup>1</sup>

Firearms killed more than  
**38,000**

Americans in 2016— about the same number as died in motor vehicle crashes.<sup>1</sup>

About  
**3/5**

of all firearm deaths each year are from suicide.<sup>1</sup>

Suicide by firearm is the leading cause of violent death in the US. More than  
**80%**

of firearm suicide attempts are fatal.<sup>2</sup>

**82%**

of youths who commit suicide use a family member's gun.<sup>3</sup>

Mass shootings account for only  
**1% to 2%**  
of firearm deaths each year.<sup>4</sup>

# FAQs

**Where can I buy a safe gun storage device, like a lock box or a gun safe?** You can buy gun locking and storage devices where firearms are sold. This includes gun stores, gun ranges, and sporting goods stores. Cable locks are available for free at many gun stores. You can also check if your local law enforcement agency has a program for distributing gun locking devices.<sup>5</sup>

**Does having a gun in my home make my family safer?** Many people think having a gun in the home makes them safer, but having a gun in the home increases the risk that a violent death will happen.<sup>6</sup> On average, risk for homicide in the home goes up by a factor of 2.7 and risk of suicide goes up by a factor of 4.8 when a gun is present.<sup>7,8</sup> When someone in the home has risk factors, such as trouble with alcohol, risk goes up even more.<sup>9</sup>

**I think there are guns in my home, but I don't know how they're stored. What can I do?** Talk with the person who owns the guns about the importance of safely storing guns to keep them out of the wrong hands. You can ask your health care provider for more information on the risk of firearms and firearm safety to help you start this conversation.

**I'm worried there might be an unlocked gun in a home where my child plays. What should I do?** You can ask other parents about guns when you ask any other safety questions. Say, "Is there an unlocked gun in your house?" Make clear that this is a safety question and avoid being judgmental. If the answer is yes, talk about your concerns and see if the owner is willing to store the guns safely. Don't let your child play where there are guns that are not safely stored.

**I'm worried about someone else's access to guns, but I don't know how to bring it up. What should I do?** Talk to your health care provider about the risks of guns in the home and ask any questions you have about guns and gun safety. When you feel comfortable starting this conversation, take care to avoid being judgmental or confrontational, and make clear that you are asking out of concern for safety. If the situation is an emergency, contact local law enforcement or emergency services.

**If I give up my guns temporarily because someone is in danger, will it affect my ability to have guns in the future?** As long as you aren't required to give up your guns for any reason, giving them up temporarily because someone is at risk of hurting himself or someone else shouldn't affect your ability to own guns in the future. If you give up your guns temporarily, some states will make sure you still pass a background check before they can be returned to you.

**I want training in firearm safety. Where can I get it?** Many gun clubs, ranges, and stores offer firearms safety courses.

**How can I safely get rid of a gun?** The options for safely getting rid of a gun depend on where you live. Guns can usually be sold to licensed gun dealers. In some places, you can turn in unwanted guns to local law enforcement or participate in a gun buy-back program. Check with local law enforcement to learn about the options in your area.

**Where can I learn more about gun laws in my state?** Federal and state gun laws are available online from the [RAND State Firearm Law Database](#), the [Giffords Law Center](#), and the [NRA Institute for Legislative Action](#).

**I have other questions about the risks of gun ownership and gun safety. Where can I learn more?** You can bring up your questions with your health care provider, and visit the [What You Can Do](#) initiative website to explore more resources.

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Prepared as part of the  
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