



Protecting Your Child from Gun Injury

*A Child's Curiosity Can
Lead to Severe Injury
or Death*





FACT In the United States, 33 percent of homes have at least one gun.

FACT In the United States, nearly 40 percent of homes with a child under 18 years of age have a gun.

FACT Most 5- and 6-year-olds are strong enough to pull the trigger on the average handgun. Even one out of four 3- and 4-year-olds is strong enough!

FACT More than half of accidental shooting deaths of children under 15 years of age occur in a friend's home and fully two-thirds of fatal shootings of those under 18 years of age occur by way of a family member or friend.

When it comes to guns, parents can't be too careful!



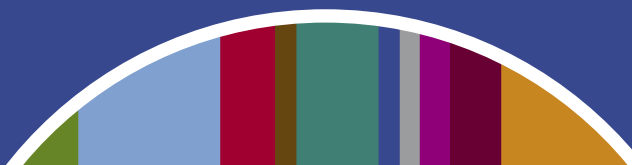
Protective Measures to Remember


- ▶ A home is safer without a handgun.
- ▶ Introduce the difference between toy guns and real guns early and talk about the dangers of real guns.
- ▶ In homes with guns, children are safest if:
 - Guns are stored unloaded
 - Guns are locked in a safe or with a trigger lock
 - Bullets are stored and locked separately
 - Keys to the firearms and ammunition safes are kept with the owner at all times
- ▶ Even if you do not own a gun, you need to make sure the homes your child visits are safe.

Parents Need to A.S.K. *Asking Saves Kids*

Even if you do not own a gun, ask your neighbors, friends, and family — the people whose homes your child will visit — if they have a gun.

- ▶ If the answer is NO, you have one less worry.
- ▶ If the answer is YES, keep your child away from homes where there are guns or where they are not safely stored.





Some people may not agree with you, but it's important that you talk about your concerns. The following tips will make asking about guns easier:

- ▶ Bring up the topic when you talk about other health and safety issues such as seat belts, pets and other animals, or allergies.
- ▶ Share the facts that you know about gun safety. Let people know you are not judging them. You just want to make sure your child is safe.

Commonly Asked Questions

“With so much violence, isn't it safer for me to have a handgun in my home?”

NO. In homes with handguns, it is much more likely that the handgun will be used in a suicide, domestic dispute, or accidental shooting than in self-defense.

- ▶ Shootings in the home often occur when:
 - A child finds a gun or is showing a friend the gun kept at home, and accidentally pulls the trigger
 - A depressed teenager or adult becomes suicidal
 - An argument between family members gets out of control
 - A friend or family member is mistaken for an intruder

Every year thousands of Americans are seriously injured or killed in these situations.



“Can’t I just teach my child not to touch the gun?”

NO. Children need protection from guns.

- ▶ As infants become toddlers, exploring and playing are the ways they learn about the world.
- ▶ Even well-behaved children find that their curiosity can overcome their parents’ warnings. Young children simply do not understand how dangerous guns can be.
- ▶ Scientific studies have shown that even when school-aged children complete gun safety programs, they can’t overcome their natural curiosity. They will still pick up and play with a gun if they find one.



“Can’t I just hide my gun away from my child?”

NO. A child’s urge to explore and discover is very strong.

- ▶ Every day in America, on average, three children are severely disabled when they find a gun someone thought was hidden.
- ▶ The only safe way to hide a gun is to lock it away.





National Resource

The Center to Prevent Youth Violence (www.cpyv.org) is an educational organization that works to bring an end to gun violence against children and families.

The information contained in this publication does not constitute legal advice and should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician or other doctor. Indicators and recommendations may vary based on individual facts and circumstances.



For additional copies:

Massachusetts Medical Society
Public Health and Education
860 Winter Street
Waltham, MA 02451-1411

www.massmed.org/violence

(800) 322-2303, x7373

dph@mms.org



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This tip card is part of a series originated by Robert Sege, MD, PhD, Boston, MA, and developed with the Massachusetts Medical Society's Committee on Violence Intervention and Prevention.

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