

Gun Safety

Regardless of what you think about them, guns are part of our society. Police carry guns to keep order and ensure public safety. Criminals carry guns to intimidate people and commit crimes. Law-abiding citizens own guns for sport, collection, and protection. There are almost as many guns in the United States as there are people. Children need to be taught how to be safe from guns.

4 Basic Gun Safety Rules for Children

If you see a gun:

**STOP!
Don't Touch.
Leave the Area.
Tell a trusted Adult**

One possible strategy to decrease firearm injury and deaths to children is educational programs. These can be directed at the children themselves, or at parents and adults to store guns more safely in the home (or out of the home). The Eddie Eagle GunSafe® Program teaches children in pre-K through third grade four important steps to take if they find a gun. These steps are presented in a video by Eddie Eagle, in an easy-to-remember format.

Other educational programs for gun safety do exist and will be added to our website (www.caases.org). If you don't see them now check back in the near future.

What Children Need to Know

Children need to know about gun safety. They need to know what to do when guns are present. Children must understand and follow safety rules. They need to know the dangers of guns. Also, they need guidance to help them to steer clear of danger.

Explain how to stay safe. Tell your children they should:

- Stop, don't touch any guns or bullets. They are not toys and should not be handled or touched in any way. Assume all guns are loaded and ready to fire.
- Leave the area at once if guns or bullets are present. If your children see a gun at the home of a friend or relative's house, or at a park or school, tell them to get away fast. Go to the nearest safe place - another room, another home, a familiar business, etc.
- Tell a trusted adult. Tell a parent, teacher, law enforcement officer or other adult right away.

Teach your children early and often. They are never too young to learn the following lessons:

- Guns kill. Explain the physical harm guns can cause. Tell them that handling guns, for any reason, can easily lead to serious injury, permanent disability, or death.
- Television violence is **not** real. Explain that media entertainment is made to believe. Discuss the fact that actors walk away after the scene involving guns and shooting. People in real life do not.

Basic Rules of Gun Safety

Follow basic rules of gun safety. The safest homes are gun-free. Choosing not to have guns in your home is the most effective step you can take to prevent gun injury. If you own a gun, consider storing it at a gun club or other facility.

If you keep a gun at home store it properly:

- Unloaded.
- In a locked gun safe, a strongbox or other secured container.
- Store ammunition separately.
- Keep the gun, ammunition, and key out of sight and reach of children.
- Take a gun safety class. NRA posts on their web site adult and children gun safety schools or classes. Join NRA at www.caases.org.

What Parents Need to Know

Every parent needs to know about gun safety. Maybe you don't own a gun. But many others, including friends, relatives, and neighbors may.

Consider:

- Gunshot injuries are a leading cause of death. Gun-related injuries are the 2nd leading cause of death among young people over age 10. Many of these deaths are suicides.
- Many gun injuries occur in homes. In fact, most gun incidents involve people who know each other. Victims are often children playing with guns they assume are unloaded.
- Having a gun increases the risk of injury. Statistically, injury or death by gunshot is more likely in homes where guns are kept.
- Children are naturally curious. They love to explore and experiment. Assume your children will discover any "secret hiding place" in homes where they live, play, and visit.
- Guns are familiar and attractive to children. Toy guns are popular with children. They see plenty of guns and gun violence on TV, in movies, and in video games. Some children cannot tell the difference between real guns and fake ones.

Some Myths About Gun Safety

"If I have a gun at home, I won't be a victim" In some cases this might be true. But the fact is that a gun in the home is **43 times** more likely to kill a friend or relative than an intruder. Without extreme care, a gun can easily hurt an unintended target.

"My children will never find my gun" Don't count on it. Children are extremely curious and resourceful. If you own a gun, chances are he or she will discover where you keep it. That's why proper storage is critical.

"Isn't a lot of the talk about gun violence overblown?" Not if you look at the facts. Keep in mind that nearly as many people die each year of gunshot wounds as die in auto crashes.

"I don't have a gun, so my child is perfectly safe." Guns may be found in many places your child visits - schools and the homes of friends and relatives for example. That's why gun safety is a concern even if you don't own a gun yourself.

"Keeping guns away from young people won't stop them from killing themselves." Young people often act on impulse - especially when they are upset. Not having a gun around **will** prevent many teenagers from acting on any deadly impulses. Remove all your guns and ammunition from your home if your child is depressed or involved with alcohol or other drugs.

"BB guns are only toys." Think again. Many people are hurt each year by BB and air guns. A few lose their lives.

"Guns are only a problem in inner cities." Not true. Guns are present in cities, towns, and in rural areas. Gun shootings occur **everywhere**.