



Talk to your kids about guns.

Make sure your children understand:

- Guns are real, not like in video games.
- All guns, including shot guns and sport rifles, can kill or injure people.
- Every gun should be treated as if it is loaded.

If they see a gun or a friend says they have one:

- Don't touch it! Get away from it.
- Tell an adult immediately.
- Don't dismiss talk about guns, suicide, or killing people. Tell an adult what you hear.

If they are inside and hear gunshots outside:

- Duck and cover. Get behind furniture.
- Stay away from the windows.
- Call 911 and wait for help to arrive.

When your kids are old enough to go hunting:

- Attend a gun safety course with them, so the whole family learns the same safety rules.
- Don't let them have access to guns when not hunting with a responsible adult.
- Teach them about the danger of mixing guns and alcohol, and make sure all adults in your hunting party set positive examples by not drinking when guns are accessible.

Awkward conversations
come with being
a parent.

But this one could
save your child's life.

Parents face many difficult conversations:

"Our kids may have exposed your kids to lice."

"Your daughter has quite a vocabulary."

"Is there an unsecured gun at your house?"

Before you send your child to someone else's home for a play date, sleep over, party, or babysitting, **ASK** if there are unsecured guns in the home. If you have any doubts, move the event to your house instead. It might be uncomfortable, especially if it involves relatives, but your child's life is worth it.

The Health Care Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence is a caucus of Protect Minnesota, an independent, state-based non-profit that promotes the health and safety of all Minnesotans by preventing gun violence through effective laws, policies, and community education. Find out more at www.protectmn.org.

Many thanks to the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence for the suicide data provided in this brochure.

Protect Minnesota

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Kids and Guns



A Guide to Keeping Your Children and Teens Safe



HEALTH CARE
COALITION

TO PREVENT
GUN VIOLENCE

Job #1: Protect your kids.

Before they were born you baby-proofed your house and made sure the crib complied with all safety codes. Now you buckle them into car seats, strap on their bike helmets, and have them wear life jackets out on the lake. **But have you made sure they are safe from guns?**

45% of homes in Minnesota have guns, and many people with children do not store their guns safely. This is a grave concern because:

- *A gun in your home is 22 times more likely to kill or injure a family member than to be used in self-defense.*
- *48 American children and teens are shot every day, and seven of them die.*
- *American children are 16 times more likely to be killed in unintentional shootings than their peers in other high-income countries.*
- *More than three times as many toddlers are killed with guns in America than police officers. Toddlers kill many more Americans every year with guns than terrorists do.*
- *Nearly 90% of unintentional firearm deaths of children under age 15 occur in a home.*
- *Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24 in Minnesota.*



Safe storage means safe kids. Lock up your guns!

Hiding guns is not enough. Studies have shown that most children know where their parents hide their guns, even if the parents think they don't. Kids are naturally curious; if they find a gun, they'll pick it up and play with it. It's your responsibility to make sure your guns are secure.

1. Never keep a gun in a night stand, desk drawer, purse, or under your pillow! All firearms should be stored **UNLOADED** and **LOCKED** securely, ideally in a gun safe. Affordable gun safes are available in a wide variety of sizes and styles.
2. Trigger locks and locking gun cases are also options, although they don't prevent guns from being stolen the way gun safes do.
3. Ammunition should be **LOCKED UP** separately from firearms. This is an important step, especially in preventing gun suicides.
4. **NEVER** leave a gun in your car glove compartment. Purchase a vehicle gun safe for transporting firearms.
5. Research has shown that children as young as one year old have the strength to pull the trigger on many handguns. Very young children often look down the barrel of a gun when they pick it up, putting their thumbs on the trigger. **Your child is never too young for you to worry about gun safety.**
6. Parents of teens tend to become more lax about storing guns safely as children get older. This is a mistake. **Teens are actually at greater risk from guns than young children**, due in large part to suicide attempts.



Suicide Prevention

More young people die each year from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, strokes, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung diseases combined. Firearms are the most common method of teen suicide, and the vast majority (82%) involve a gun belonging to a family member. **Tragically, about three out of four teens use a parent's gun.**

Although depression is an important predictor, 40% of youth under age 16 who commit suicide have no known psychiatric disorder. For many young people the availability of a gun in the home is the most significant predictor of suicide.

If you are worried about your child's mental health, here are three things you can do **right now** to decrease their risk of suicide:

1. **Remove all firearms from your home.** *Anyone* living in a home with a gun is three times more likely to commit suicide.
2. Learn as much as you can about preventing teen suicide. Call **1-800-273-8255**, the 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, or click on "Youth" at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.
3. Never discount a suicidal comment as a joke or attention-getting ploy. **Your child's life might be saved by paying attention to red flags.** Seek professional help if you have concerns.