

# Safely Storing Guns and Ammunition in Your Home

If you choose to keep guns and ammunition in your house, it's important to store them safely. This handout will teach you how to safely store your guns and ammunition. It will also give you tips on how to teach your child about gun safety.

## HOW SHOULD I STORE MY GUNS AND AMMUNITION WITH CHILDREN IN THE HOUSE?

There are many important steps in storing your guns and ammunition. Here is how you can safely store your guns and ammunition at home:

- **Store your guns in a secure locked container.** Keep the gun safe hidden from your child and other family members.
- **Unload all ammunition before storing your guns in a locked gun safe.** The National Rifle Association (NRA) recommends that guns be stored unloaded until you need to use them.
- **Keep your ammunition in a locked safe that is separate from your gun safe.** Storing your ammunition away from your guns will lower the risk of your child or other family members putting the ammunition into the gun.
- **Put a different lock on each gun.** Store the keys out of reach of your child and other family members.
- **Check your guns every time you take them out and put them back in storage.** Make sure another family member hasn't left ammunition in the gun or left anything unlocked.
- **Talk to your child early and often about gun safety.** Tell him/her not to touch the guns or ammunition if he/she knows where they are stored.

### *Facts about gun dangers and owning a gun*

- There are guns in 4 out of every 10 homes with children in the United States.
- Children as young as 3 are strong enough to pull the trigger on a gun. 1 out of every 4 children has held a gun without their parents knowing.
- Every other day, 1 child under age 10 is killed or hurt by a gun by accident.
- Every day in the United States, on average 9 children are killed by a gun and 20 children are taken to the hospital for injuries from guns.
- Many people buy guns for protection. But, gun owners are more likely to hurt or kill themselves or other family members than intruders.
- The most common cause of death from guns in the United States is suicide. Every year, about 22,000 people take their lives with guns. Gun owners are 3 times more likely to die from homicide (being killed by another person) than those who don't own guns.

## HOW CAN I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT GUN SAFETY?

- **Talk with your child as early and as often as possible.** Your child needs to hear about gun safety many times so he/she remembers the information.
- **Get your partner on the same page.** Your children should get the same information from both you and your partner. Discuss with your partners what you will tell your children about gun safety.
- **Have the talk in a quiet place without distractions.**
- **The talk should be a serious conversation, not a lecture.** Ask your child what he/she knows so you can clear up any misunderstandings.
- **Encourage your child to ask questions.** Children and teens of all ages are naturally curious about guns. Just because your child doesn't ask a question doesn't mean he/she doesn't have a question in mind. Answer questions honestly and in a way your child can understand.
- **Tell your child never to touch your gun(s) or ammunition without you around.** Tell your child to never point a gun at anyone, and to always assume that a gun is loaded and can be fired.
- **If your child sees or finds a gun, tell him/her to stop what he/she is doing and tell an adult.** You should also tell your child to never touch or pick up a gun or ammunition.

### ***Most importantly, set a good example for your children***

Children learn how to behave from adults around them. If your child sees you modeling safe, responsible behavior around guns, he/she has a better chance of behaving safely and responsibly around guns.

### ***Make sure everyone in your home is properly trained in gun safety***

Visit the following websites for more information on proper firearms training:

- Massachusetts firearms safety website  
[www.mass.gov/service-details/firearms-safety](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/firearms-safety)
- Firearms training classes by area  
[www.goal.org/training/instructor\\_listing.html](http://www.goal.org/training/instructor_listing.html)

## I OWN A GUN, BUT I WANT TO GET RID OF IT. HOW CAN I DO THAT?

Getting rid of guns can help protect your children and family from accidents caused by guns. Here are some tips on getting rid of your gun:

- **Store your gun outside the home**, such as in a secure storage unit or bonded warehouse for gun storage.
- **Call your local police department to set up a time to drop off unwanted guns, ammunition and other weapons to your local police station.** All police departments take back guns, ammunition and other weapons. You will not get in trouble for having the gun.
- **Ask different police stations in your area about gun buy-back programs.** With gun buy-back programs, you can get money or gift cards when you return your guns or other weapons.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT GUN SAFETY?

- **Project ChildSafe®**  
A nonprofit organization committed to promoting gun and other firearm safety with gun owners. You can find helpful tips on gun safety, talking to your kids about guns and free tools and resources.  
[www.projectchildsafe.org](http://www.projectchildsafe.org)
- **The American Academy of Pediatrics®**  
Visit [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) and search for gun safety.

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## **Pediatric Primary Care**

**Mass General Hospital for Children**

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