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GUN SAFETY TIPS

Advice for parents

More than half of homes in Maine have guns, which means that most children are living with, or entering homes with guns. That's why we created a free gun lock program and recommend the following tips to keep children safe.

- Never keep loaded guns in your home.
- Always store your gun with a trigger lock and in a locked cabinet.
- Lock and store bullets in a separate location from guns.
- Keep guns out of sight and reach of children.
- Make sure cabinet/gun lock keys are inaccessible to children.
- Ask if there are unlocked guns in play-date homes before your children go to play.
- Educate your children to treat all firearms as loaded and dangerous.
- Tell kids that when they see a gun, they should STOP, don't touch, leave the area quickly and calmly, and tell an adult right away.
- If your child or anyone in your home is known to be suicidal, remove all guns from your home.

Know the risk

According to an analysis of federal data and public health research into the relationship between unsecured guns and unintentional shootings:

- 70% of children under the age of 10 knew where their parents stored their guns
- 36% of these children reported handling the weapons
- 39% of parents thought their child was not aware of where the guns were hidden
- 1 In 5 parents who thought their child hadn't handled a gun were wrong

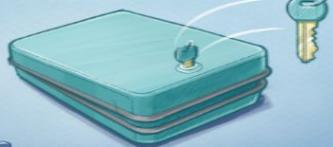
Children and safe gun storage
The safest home for a child is one without guns. If you have children and store guns in your home, follow these tips to prevent gun-related injury or death.

- Store all guns unloaded
- Store ammunition in a separate lockable container
- Ensure children cannot access keys or codes to safes and locks
- Teach kids to **stop, do not touch, and tell a grown-up** if they find a gun
- Ask if there are guns in other homes where your children play

Safe gun storage products

Trigger or cable lock


Lockable gun case


Lock box


Safe with a biometric lock


For more information, visit besmartforkids.org and projectchildsafe.org

Tips for Talking to Your Child

- Make gun safety a part of your normal safety conversation, starting at an early age.
- Ask your child what they already know about guns and what questions they have.
- If your child finds a gun, they should stop, should not touch, and should tell a grown-up.
- Tell your child not to touch a gun, even if it looks like a toy.
- Online child-friendly videos can help guide the conversation.
- Repetition is key. Talk about gun safety routinely and add age-appropriate information as your child matures.
- Sign a family safety pledge to show you are committed to gun safety.

What Else Can Caregivers Do?

Ask if there are guns in the homes where your children play. More than one-third of unintentional shootings occur in the homes of relatives, friends, or neighbors. Also talk to your child about gun violence on social media, TV, and video games. Children may not realize that in real life, guns can hurt people so it is important to differentiate screen violence vs real life.

Ask your pediatrician for advice on gun safety, including how to talk to your child and options for safe gun storage. If your child is interested in shooting sports, talk to your pediatrician about whether your child is mature enough to handle a lethal weapon. Any minor (younger than 18 years) using a firearm is required to be supervised by an adult. Youth safety courses can be found through your local community or national organizations.

Most importantly, be SMART:

- Secure all guns in your homes and vehicles
- Model responsible behavior around guns
- Ask about presence of unsecured guns in other homes
- Recognize the role of guns in suicide
- Tell your peers to be SMART
- **The South Portland Police Department has free gun locks for anyone who wants one.**