

Child Gun Safety

Child gun safety statistics

Statistics at the National level have recently found that as many as 40% of American homes with children have some form of a gun or firearm in their home.

The research further indicates that as many as 1 in 4 or 25% of those homes keep their guns loaded. Additionally the research says that when accidents, suicide, or homicide occurs in a home, the gun used at the time was a gun found right in the same home.

National research also indicates that these numbers are probably on the low side, with more statistics pending due to the large number of unregistered firearms on the market.

While many Americans practice their right to own a firearm for personal safety, many parents forget to take the steps necessary to practice child gun safety in their home.

The fact of the matter is that guns can seriously harm or kill a child, and parents need to make sure that they are taking every precaution to protect their children from the very devices they use to protect themselves.

Here we will talk about some steps that you as a parent can take to ensure that your home is as safe as possible if you choose to keep a firearm in the house.

Keeping guns or firearms in the home

The decision to keep a gun or a firearm in the home is not one that should be taken lightly, and a decision that comes with a wide range of responsibilities to you as a parent.

There is a serious risk of gun related injury or death when children are around guns, and when one is in their own home that risk escalates substantially.

Children particularly are especially curious when it comes to guns and gun safety. As a parent, do not lull yourself into a false sense of security when it comes to gun safety.

Experts at the National Rifle Association caution parents to not only speak to their children about guns and gun safety, but to make the inherent assumption that if a child sees a gun, their instinct is to pick it up, and pull the trigger.

The media does not help us in this matter, making action and adventure look fun, nor do today's toymakers with a bevy of play weapons on the market.

Parents are urged not to purchase a firearm or a gun at all if they are not willing to take on the standard responsibilities of child gun safety.

Ensuring child gun safety

How can you ensure your children are safe when you have a gun in the home? The two basic responsibilities you have as a parent and as a gun owner, are to:

- Store your gun appropriately and safely.
- Talk to your children about guns, gun safety, and what they should or should not do around guns.

The Safest Ways to Store Your Gun or Firearm in a Home with Children:

- Keep your gun unloaded, and keep it locked up. A loaded gun is an immediate weapon.
- Lock your gun and your ammunition in separate locations. If ammunition is easy to get to, children will learn very fast how to load an unloaded gun.

- Hide the keys to your gun or firearm safe or location, or better yet, keep them on you at ALL times. Some parents even wear them on a necklace to ensure maximum safety.
- Ask your neighbors who may also own guns if their weapons are stored in similar fashion, this is especially important if homes that your child frequents.
- Talk with your children about guns and firearm safety.

Talking to your children

You may be wondering what is the appropriate way to talk to your children about child gun safety. How you talk to your children about gun safety will depend on their age and what they can or can not relate to or understand. Here are some tips:

Very Young Children: The younger your children are, the more important it is to teach them that what they see on TV or in the movies is not real and that real guns can really hurt people, even themselves.

Young children need to be taught never to touch guns under any circumstance.

This message needs to be repeated periodically in order to keep kids from forgetting.

A simple 4-step rule as proposed by the Eddie Eagle Gun Safe program teaches children from pre-kindergarten through Grade 4 important gun safety steps. These include, "If You See A Gun:"

- STOP!
- DON'T TOUCH!
- LEAVE!
- TELL AN ADULT!

This system is easy to remember for children of this age group.

Pre-teens: Pre-teens are at the perfect age to start learning and being taught that guns and violence do not solve problems, and in fact, can create even more.

This age group needs to learn that there are serious consequences when it comes to handling guns poorly. They need to be emphasized that they should never touch guns unless they have permission to do so.

Teens: Teens are actually the most difficult group to talk to about gun safety, as they are generally more rebellious and independent.

Maintain a steady dialogue with your teen and see if you can spot any possible problems.

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that it is more difficult to keep teens away from guns, than it is to keep guns away from teens, so at this stage, you may want to keep the gun out of your home if your teen poses a risk to gun safety.

The parent of a teen that owns a gun needs to be more vigilant towards signs of depression or isolation as these are signs of an increased risk of suicide. A gun will only make it easier for your teen.

The tips here may seem simple but even one step alone can dramatically decrease the number of kids that are hurt by guns every year.

The most effective measure of child gun safety that you can implement in your home is to not have one at all.

However, if you do decide to maintain a firearm in your home, ensure you take every responsibility of gun ownership, and parenting, very seriously to prevent gun related deaths and injuries to your most valuable assets – your children.