

FIREARMS & SUICIDE



QUICK FACT SHEET

This is not just a mental health issue. Gun ownership is associated with state suicide rates even when we account for depression, substance use, suicidal thoughts, poverty, education, access to care, religion, and many other relevant factors.¹

WHAT WE KNOW

- 1 When individuals are kept from using a specific suicide method, they do not simply "find another way."²
- 2 The risk for death by suicide is even higher when a firearm is stored unsafely (e.g. loaded and in a non-secure location).³
- 3 Individuals are up to 5 times as likely to die by suicide when there is a firearm in their home.⁴
- 4 Firearms are more deadly than other methods Whereas only 2-3% of intentional overdoses - by far the most common suicide attempt method - result in death, firearms result in death in 85-95% of suicide attempts.⁵

WHAT WE CAN DO

1

Safe Storage

Keep firearms locked and secured.



2

Store Ammunition Separately

Keep firearms and ammunition stored in different locations



3

Store Offsite

Especially in cases where someone in the household is experiencing thoughts of suicide, it's best to store firearms elsewhere.



Fact

Access to and experience with firearms do not make individuals become suicidal. They make suicidal individuals more capable of dying.⁶

MEANS SAFETY

Means safety involves making specific methods for suicide less deadly or less available for a suicide attempt and has been shown to reduce suicide rates with respect to firearms (7) and other methods (8) across the globe (9).

Means safety is meant to complement, not replace mental health care. Asking someone to floss does not mean asking them not to brush their teeth. Focusing on the method of suicide does not mean ignoring the motivation for suicide.



Tip: Time and space between a person with thoughts of suicide and a firearm, using safe storage, can potentially save their life.



ATTEMPTS & DEATHS

Attempts By
Firearm vs. All
Means



■ Firearms (5%)
■ All Means (95%)

Firearm Suicide
Deaths vs. All
Means



■ Firearms (53%)
■ All Means (47%)

Firearms account for less than 5% of all US suicide attempts, but more than 50% of all US suicide deaths.¹⁰

Individuals who die by suicide using a gun are less likely to have had a previous suicide attempt by any method than are individuals who die by suicide using something other than a gun. We do not get a second chance with these individuals and we often first learn of their risk when they are already dead.¹¹

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255

SOURCES

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Special Thanks to:
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