Asking About Secure Gun Storage

Owning a gun is a personal decision, but secure storage is a public safety issue. Kids and unsecured guns are a potentially lethal combination. Fortunately, a simple conversation can help keep children out of harm's way. It doesn't need to feel strange or awkward to bring up the issue of how guns are stored. These simple conversations with your friends, caregivers, and relatives *before* your child visits can help save lives.

Sample conversation starters

Part of general safety conversations

"Before I drop my son off, I just wanted to check to see if you have pets? And also ask if you have firearms in your house and confirm how they are stored. I want to make sure he knows your safety rules."

Part of other teen safety conversations

"Hey, excited the kids are getting together over the weekend. I know that they've hung out quite a bit, but my daughter has never been over to your house so I want to confirm a couple of things: Will an adult be at the house the whole time? Also, I heard a story on the news that made me decide I should always ask this—do you have any firearms, and how are they stored? Do you need me to pick her up or can you give her a ride home?"

If you know that the homeowner or your family member is a gun owner.

"We are looking forward to spending time with you and with the whole family. I know I have never asked this before, but after hearing about a recent unintentional shooting in the area (refer to the Not An Accident map), I just have to ask: how are your guns stored? The kids get into everything and I don't want to spend the day looking over my shoulder worried about them, or the rest of the kids. (*option*: I'm happy to purchase gun locks if you don't have them)."

Confirm secure storage practices. *Following their description, if you need to know more, then you* can *ask direct questions, like:* "What kind of lock do you use?" or "How do you store ammunition?"

Sample text or email starters

Sometimes these conversations are easier via email. Try "sandwiching" your question amongst other questions and information. For example:

"I know my son hasn't been to your home before and I do like to ask a few safety questions. He is skittish around dogs, do you have any? Also, do you own any firearms, and if so, how are they stored? Finally, will they be playing video games? We only allow limited time on ones rated 'E.' He doesn't have any allergies. For future reference, no pets, and no firearms at our home. Thanks so much."

Sample texts, emails, or conversation starters for teenage babysitters

Certainly there are times that a teen will be in the role of the caregiver and need to confirm this information on his/her own. The onus is still on adults. Here is sample language.

"I'm confirming that you need me at 7pm on Saturday evening. Let me know if the kids will need to be fed. Also, my parents wanted me to ask if there are any unsecured guns in the home? Thanks."

Make it a deal-breaker

In the unlikely event that your friends or relatives don't confirm that they store guns securely, make sure they know that you won't allow your children in their home:

"I'm sorry but unless you make sure your guns are locked the entire time we're/John's at your home, we/he won't be able to make it. The kids are good kids, but curious, and I just can't take the risk of them hurting themselves or someone else. We'd be happy to have you at our house instead this year."

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For more information or to get involved visit **BeSMARTforKids.org**
Be SMART is a program of Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
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Share your own secure gun storage habits

If you are a gun owner, volunteer information about your own secure gun storage habits, and let your friends and family know that you are open to having the conversation with them:

"Hi we just got a new puppy—I wanted to flag in case there were any allergies. Also, I wanted to let you know that we hunt in the fall, but our guns are stored securely, locked, unloaded with the ammunition stored separately. It's important for us to know about your gun ownership and storage practices ahead of time too. Can't wait to see you!"

Be SMART

Many unintentional shootings happen in the homes of relatives, friends, or caregivers. It's very possible that some of your family members or close friends have unsecured guns in their home. It's important to ask each time your child will visit, as storage practices and gun ownership may change. Never make assumptions when a child's safety is at stake. It's up to all of us to keep our children safe.

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