

UW Health Kids: Talking about firearm storage an important step for child safety

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MADISON, Wis. – To recognize National ASK Day, a UW Health Kids expert is encouraging parents and caregivers to ask questions about whether guns are accessible to their children.

Asking Saves Kids (ASK) Day, supported by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP), is about raising awareness and educating families on the importance of safe firearms storage, according to Dr. Adam Brinkman, medical director, pediatric trauma, UW Health Kids.

“When a parent drops their child off at another family’s home for a play date or birthday party, we want to encourage parents to ask about safe firearm storage,” he said. “All too often, firearms get into the hands of children leading to severe, oftentimes lethal, injuries.”

New data has shown that the number of firearms-related injuries among children have increased [during the pandemic](#) and death by firearms is now the leading cause of death for those age 19 and younger, according to a [March 2022 study](#) published by the AAP.

Locally, UW Health Kids has seen this trend. Since 2020, there have been 29 firearm related injuries, including multiple deaths, seen at American Family Children’s Hospital.

There were nine firearms injuries in 2017, seven in 2018 and just one in 2019 seen at American Family Children’s Hospital. But in 2020 the cases rose sharply to 15

firearms-related injuries, 10 in 2021 and four firearms injuries so far in 2022.

“As physicians we want to reverse this trend and keep our kids safe,” Brinkman said. “This day is important because pediatric safety advocates come together to highlight the dangers of unlocked guns in the home and offer strategies to prevent firearms-related injuries.”

UW Health Kids and [AAP](#) offer the following tips:

- Teach children not to touch guns and go find an adult right away if they find one.
- Kids are safer when the firearm is in a locked box or a safe, unloaded.
- Ammunition should be locked away separately.
- Talk with other parents or caregivers to ask if they are following these safety measures if your child will be spending time in their home.
- Decide who to ask, how to ask and think about how to respond to different answers in advance.
- Figure out who you’re most comfortable talking with among the adults in charge and ask your questions before the visit.

“We want parents to talk to their kids and each other about potential dangers of firearms and be sure kids know what they should do if they come across improperly secured firearms,” Brinkman said.

A recorded interview with Brinkman is available.