Firearms

While Virginians have the right to own guns, they have the responsibility to store those guns safely and out of children's reach. According to the 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, approximately 38 percent of Virginians keep firearms in or around their homes; 1 in 6 are unlocked and loaded.

Firearm-Related Injuries in Virginia, 2009

- There were 832 firearm deaths in Virginia in 2009, making it the leading cause of injury death.
- Nearly two-thirds of deaths attributed to firearms were suicides. Homicides accounted for 32% of firearm deaths and 1.3% were unintentional in nature.
- Firearms were the leading cause of death for both suicide and homicide. Firearms were used in 55% of suicides and 70% of homicides.
- There were 615 firearm-related hospitalizations in Virginia in 2009.
- The majority of firearm hospitalizations were due to assaults (55%), followed by unintentional injuries (24%) and self-inflicted injuries (11%).

SAFETY TIPS:

- Store firearms unloaded and locked with a firearm safe, locked box, trigger or chamber lock.
- Store and lock ammunition in a separate place.
- Remove firearms from your home if you have a depressed or suicidal family member.
- Before you send you child to someone's house, ASK if firearms in the home are stored unloaded and locked; ASK if the ammunition is stored separately; ASK about shotguns and rifles too, not just handguns. Invite the children to play at your home if you have doubts about the safety of someone else's home.
- Talk with your children about the risk of firearm injury in places they may visit or play.
- Teach you child if they find a firearm to leave it alone and let an adult know right away.
- Instruct your child to leave the room and tell an adult immediately if another child shows him or her a firearm.
- Ask family and friends to use these safe storage steps.

Firearms are the leading cause of injury death in Virginia, killing more people than motor vehicle crashes, poisonings or falls.

Injury and Violence Prevention Program
Virginia Department of Health
1-800-732-8333
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Revised 11/10