

**VA**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Securely Storing Firearms and Medication Can Help Keep Veterans and Their Families Safe



Nearly half of all Veterans own a firearm. And many take medications to stay healthy.

While firearms and medications are usually handled responsibly, they can become deadly if a Veteran is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide.

Because many suicidal crises are brief, safe storage practices can save a life by increasing the amount of time and distance between someone having a suicide crisis and access to a firearm or medication.

How to Store Firearms

Firearm injuries in the home can be prevented by making sure firearms are unloaded, locked, and secured when not in use, with ammunition stored in a separate location.

There are several effective ways to securely store your firearms, as shown below.



Gun Lock
Price: \$10–\$50



Lock Box
Price: \$25–\$350



Gun Safe
Price: \$200–\$2,500

Learn more and find the option that works best for you and your family from the National Shooting Sports Foundation at nssf.org/safety.

! **REMEMBER:** Veterans can request a free gun lock from their local suicide prevention coordinator (SPC). Find your SPC at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Find-Resources/Local-Resources.

Important Information for Friends and Family of Veterans

If you're worried about a Veteran you know, talk with them about secure firearm storage and the possibility of temporarily storing weapons with a trusted friend, relative, or elsewhere (check state and local laws).



How to Store Medication

Medication is part of a healthy life for some Veterans and their family members, but it should be securely stored when not in use.

To prevent intentional or unintentional overdose:

- Have a family member or friend help manage your medication dosages.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to limit the number of refills or the quantity of medication.
- Portion out pills for a week or a day or two and lock the rest away.
- Check the date on everything in your medicine cabinet and dispose of medication if any of the following is true:
 - The medication is past its expiration date.
 - You have not used the medication in the past 12 months.
 - You no longer need the medication.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about options for safely storing medications or disposing of unused medications.

! **REMEMBER:** Always keep medications out of children's sight and reach.

Reducing Suicide Risk

Securely storing firearms and medication can help make a Veteran's home safer and decrease the risk for suicide.

If you're a Veteran having thoughts of suicide and are concerned about the well-being of your loved ones, here are ways to find support:

- Find resources and support systems, including your local suicide prevention coordinator, near you at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Find-Resources/Local-Resources.
- VA's Keep It Secure program (KeepItSecure.net) promotes awareness about the simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family. It focuses on sharing information about secure firearm and medication storage, the warning signs of suicide, and how to find the support you or a Veteran loved one needs.
- If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive 24/7, confidential support. You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect. To reach responders, **Dial 988 then Press 1**, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text **838255**.

Important Information for Friends and Family of Veterans

If you're worried about a friend or family member, ask them directly about suicide ("Are you having thoughts of suicide?" or "Are you thinking about killing yourself?") and work with them to seek help. Suicide is preventable and help is available.

