



There are several effective ways your Veteran patients can securely store firearms:

- Use a cable gun lock.
- Store firearms in a safe, locking cabinet, or lockbox.
- Store firearms disassembled or remove the firing pin.
- Store firearms at the home of someone you trust.*

**State laws may limit temporary storage options. Confirm the laws in your state before making recommendations to Veterans.*

How to Store Medication

To prevent intentional or unintentional overdose, clinicians should limit quantities of medications prescribed. If a patient is at higher risk, consider asking them to involve a family member or friend in medication management. Share these additional tips with your Veteran patients:

- 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.

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VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

How to talk to Veteran patients about safe firearm and medication storage

While firearms and medications are usually handled responsibly, they can become deadly if a Veteran is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide. The **GROW Framework** can be used as a conversation guide when talking with a Veteran about how to make their home safer and decrease their risk for suicide.

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Get ready

Consider important factors before having the conversation

- How well do you know this patient?
- Does the patient live with other people?
- What is the patient's level of suicide risk?

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Reason for the discussion

Help the Veteran understand the rationale for the conversation

- "Even if you're not having thoughts of suicide right now, it's important to be prepared if you do experience a crisis. Would it be OK if we talked about how to stay safe?"
- "Rates of suicide with firearms are high among Veterans, and depression can increase risk for suicide. I'm talking



with all my patients with signs of depression about things they can do to stay safe, including how to store firearms and medication.”

- “It’s common for children and, especially, teenagers to know exactly where firearms and medications are hidden in the house. Can I share some safe ways to store firearms and medication?”



Offer brief advice

Use collaborative language that empowers the Veteran to take steps toward improving safety

- “Many firearm accidents in the home can be prevented by making sure firearms are kept unloaded and locked, with ammunition stored in a separate location. Would you be open to trying this in your home?”
- [Higher-risk patients:] “We know that putting time and distance between suicidal thoughts and firearms can save a life. Some Veterans choose to store their firearms away from home until they’re feeling better. Is this something you might consider?”

NOTE: State laws may limit temporary storage options. See the back of this card for more information.



We’re here to help

Offer resources to reinforce behavior change

- **Keep It Secure (KeepItSecure.net):** This VA resource includes information about firearm and medication storage and the warning signs of suicide.

- **National Shooting Sports Foundation Safety Kit (NSSF.org/safety):** This toolkit promotes and encourages firearm safety and storage.
- **Free gun lock:** Veterans can request a free cable gun lock from their local suicide prevention coordinator, which can be found at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Find-Resources/Local-Resources.
- **Veterans Crisis Line (VeteransCrisisLine.net):** Veterans in crisis or those concerned about one can contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive 24/7, confidential support. Veterans 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**.
- **Share clinic contact information**

Tips for Safe Firearm and Medication Storage

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 suicidal crisis and access to a firearm or medication. Here is some detailed information you can share with your Veteran patients:

How to Store Firearms

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