

## Simple steps that can save someone you love

The best way to reduce gun risks is to remove the gun from your home.

If you keep a gun:

- Keep your guns in a sturdy locked cabinet, that does not have glass
- Always store guns unloaded
- Install trigger guards on all guns to prevent them from being used
- Keep all ammunition in a locked fireproof safe in a separate place from the guns
- Keep the keys for the trigger guards, gun cabinet, and ammunition hidden from children and persons with dementia

The safest action is to get rid of the guns. Store them at a neighbor's house, sell them, or take them to the police to be destroyed. If you keep guns in a home where someone with dementia lives, the lives you risk may be your own as well as other family and friends.

If you have questions regarding gun safety, please see your care provider.

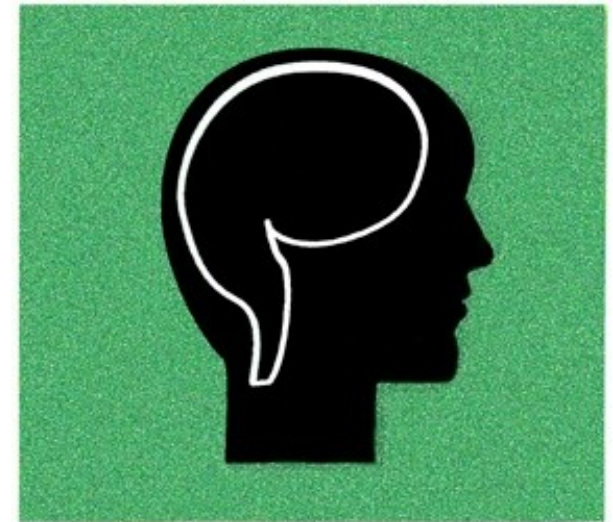


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# FIREARMS

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# DEMENTIA



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This information is provided as a service by:

Department of Veterans  
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## Firearms and Dementia

The presence of firearms in households has been linked to increased risk of injury or death for everyone in or around the home, usually as an impulsive act during some disagreement. This danger is increased when one or more of the persons in the household has dementia.

## What is Dementia?

Dementia is an illness that affects the brain, impairing memory, thinking, and actions. It is usually a progressive illness, and although it is more common in older adults, people of any age can develop it.

## Suicide

Firearms in the home can increase the possibility of completing suicide. Coping with painful life events such as the death of a loved one, physical or mental illness, and social isolation.

**Loneliness** can lead to suicidal wishes. The availability of a firearm offers a highly lethal means of completing suicide. The risk for suicide is also increased in people suffering from depression which is very common in persons with dementia.

## Family Roles

Family members do not always take appropriate action to unload, secure, or remove firearms in the home. These actions should be taken regardless of the severity of dementia or whether your loved one is suffering from a behavioral problem or depression. You are encouraged to be active in helping with your family member's medical problems and to ask for help and advice about the removal or safe storage of firearms.

Many people see guns as a means of self-protection rather than as a potential safety hazard. The belief in the right to "bear arms" can also be very high. Like driving a car, gun ownership is a powerful symbol of freedom and independence. Although dementia compromises a person's capacity to handle a weapon safely, it is not uncommon for family members to be reluctant to take away this symbol of independence from people they love.

