

Survey shows firearm safety rarely discussed between patients and clinicians

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A national survey of approximately 4,000 adults who live in households with firearms found that fewer than 10 percent have ever discussed firearm safety with a clinician (12% of those with children, 5% of those without). When conversations occurred, the most common advice given across all clinical settings was to lock all household firearms. A brief report is published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Researchers from Northeastern, Harvard, and Quinnipiac Universities analyzed data from the 2019 National Firearms Survey, conducted online from July to August 2019. Adults living in homes with firearms were asked if a physician or other [health care provider](#) ever spoke to them about [firearm safety](#). If yes, the participants were asked where the discussions occurred and whether the patient was an adult or child. They were also asked about the advice given.

The researchers found that discussions about firearm safety were uncommon in the health care setting. When firearm safety was discussed, the safety advice offered varied by context. Of respondents spoken to about firearms,

approximately half (48%) said that locking all firearms was discussed at their most recent visit, one-third (32%) said that storing ammunition separately from firearms was discussed, and one in six (16%) said that removing firearms from the home was discussed. In pediatric settings, even when firearm safety was discussed, removing firearms from the home was rarely mentioned. By contrast, when an adult other than the respondent was the patient, removal was discussed in more than half of encounters in which firearm safety was discussed (and in one-quarter of such encounters when the respondent was the patient).

According to the researchers, these findings suggest that there is considerable room for improvement when it comes to promoting firearm safety discussions in [clinical settings](#). In light of recent evidence that patients are usually open to such conversations, addressing clinician's concerns that these discussions will negatively affect the physician-patient relationship may be helpful.

More information: Andrew Conner et al. Firearm Safety Discussions Between Clinicians and U.S. Adults Living in Households With Firearms: Results From a 2019 National Survey, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.7326/M20-6314](https://doi.org/10.7326/M20-6314)

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