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AAP News

Study: Safe gun storage prevents child and teen deaths

If more parents kept the guns in their homes locked, several hundred child and adolescent deaths a year could be prevented, according to a new study.

The AAP recommends storing firearms locked and unloaded, but millions of children live in homes that don't follow this guidance.

Researchers used national data on firearm ownership, deaths and storage practices to create a model to predict the impact of increased safe storage on firearm suicides and unintentional deaths for children up to age 19.

The model assumed a 64% probability safe storage would prevent a death and found that if 20% more households started locking their guns, 72 to 135 child and adolescent deaths would be prevented in a year. If 50% more started locking their guns, 204 to 289 deaths could be prevented, according to "Association of Increased Safe Household Firearm Storage With Firearm Suicide and Unintentional Death Among US Youths" (Monuteaux MC, et al. *JAMA Pediatr.* May 13, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2LOgYTp>).

Authors noted they relied on a study from 15 years ago to perform the analysis but did not believe it was likely to significantly impact the findings.

"Results of this modeling study suggest that a relatively modest uptake of a straightforward safe storage recommendation - lock all household firearms - could result in meaningful reductions in firearm suicide and unintentional firearm fatalities among youth," they wrote. "Approaches that will motivate additional parents to store firearms safely are needed."

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