



LETHAL MEANS SAFETY TOOLKIT

Tips for Keeping Your Family Safe



By securing our homes and limiting access to lethal means, we can protect our Families and prevent the unnecessary loss of life or injury. The following tips can help you create a safer home for your loved ones, as well as identify and address possible warning signs.



Talk About Firearms and Safety

If you need to store a firearm in your home, unload and lock it away (out of reach) with the ammunition separate from the gun. Have a conversation as a Family to discuss:

- 🔒 Why your child/teen should not touch or handle a firearm while unsupervised.
- 🔒 How feelings such as anger, sadness, or fear should be expressed without using weapons.
- 🔒 Healthy ways to express feelings.
- 🔒 Who to talk to if they ever feel unsafe.
- 🔒 The differences between violence on television/movies and violence in real life.



Prevent Problems with Medicine

Both prescription and over-the-counter medications can be dangerous if they are not handled properly. Portion out the medicine you need for the week and lock away the remainder out of your child's/teen's reach. Also, be sure to:

- 🔒 Avoid keeping lethal doses of medications in your home.
- 🔒 Dispose of unwanted, unused, or expired medications at your nearest hospital or pharmacy.



Watch for Warning Signs in Your Loved Ones

The first person someone turns to when they're in distress is often a spouse or Family member. If you notice a loved one exhibiting these signs, it's okay to ask if they're thinking of suicide.

- 🔒 Dramatic shift in mood
- 🔒 Change in sleeping patterns
- 🔒 Withdrawing from Family, friends, or activities
- 🔒 Hopelessness
- 🔒 Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- 🔒 No sense of purpose in life
- 🔒 Engaging in risky activities
- 🔒 Uncontrollable anger
- 🔒 Giving away prized possessions



If You're Worried, Start the Conversation

It can be challenging to talk with a Family member when they're struggling. Start the conversation by asking:

- 🔒 **"I've noticed you don't seem like yourself!"** Let your loved one know that you've noticed a change and that you're concerned about them.
- 🔒 **"Is everything okay at home/work/school?"** Specific questions can start the conversation, but it's important to remember that their feelings may be a combination of experiences and not a specific incident.
- 🔒 **"I've had a terrible week, how was yours?"** Break the ice by sharing your life also isn't perfect and that you understand. Remember to listen without judgment and take them seriously.
- 🔒 **"Are you thinking about suicide?"** This can be the hardest question to ask, but it's important to know if a loved one is seriously considering suicide.

For more information:

- 🔒 Army Resilience Directorate website: <https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/suicide-prevention/index.html>
- 🔒 Defense Suicide Prevention Office website: <https://www.dspo.mil/>
- 🔒 VA Lethal Means Safety and Suicide Prevention <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/vision19/lethalmeanssafety/>
- 🔒 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: <https://988lifeline.org/help-someone-else/>
- 🔒 DOD Lethal Means Safety Tools and Information: <https://www.dspo.mil/Tools/Download-Library/lethalmeanssafety/>

If you need additional support, dial 988 and press 1 for the Military Crisis Line or visit <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/military-crisis-line/>.



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Military Crisis Line: Dial 988 and press 1
In Europe, dial 00-800-1273-8255
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