

After the gunshot: Hospitalizations for firearm injuries prevalent among children

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About 20 children per day in the United States are injured by firearms seriously enough to require hospitalization, and more than 6% of these children die from their injuries, according to a study by Yale School of Medicine researchers and their colleagues published in the Jan. 27 online issue of *Pediatrics*.

John Leventhal, M.D., and his team studied children and adolescents younger than age 20 at the time of admission to the [hospital](#) in 2009. In that year, in the United States, 7,391 hospitalizations occurred in this age group because of firearm injuries, and 453 of those young patients died while in the hospital. Most of these hospitalizations resulted from assaults (4,559), but in children younger than age 10, 75% of the almost 400 hospitalizations were due to unintentional or accidental injuries.

Leventhal and his team found that the most common types of firearm injuries included open wounds (52%); fractures (50%); and internal injuries of the thorax, abdomen or pelvis (34%).

Traumatic brain injuries occurred most often in children younger than age 5. Children who survive [firearm injuries](#) often require extensive follow-up treatment once released from the hospital, including rehabilitation, home health care, hospital readmission from delayed effects of the injury, and mental health or social services.

"These data highlight the toll of gun-related injuries that extends beyond high-profile cases, and those [children](#) and adolescents who die before

being hospitalized. Pediatricians and other health care providers can play an important role in preventing these injuries through counseling about firearm safety, including safe storage," said Leventhal, who points to the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendations that the safest home for a child is a home without guns, and, if there is a gun in the home, that it must be stored unloaded and locked, with the ammunition locked separately.

Provided by Yale University

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