

# New resource for dementia and firearm safety to prevent injuries

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Today, faculty members at the University of Colorado School of Medicine at the Anschutz Medical Campus announced the Safety in Dementia website, the first comprehensive online resource to help

caregivers navigate issues related to firearm access and dementia. Before now, there's been a lack of public resources available on steps to take when someone has dementia and firearms are in the home.

In the U.S., the number of Alzheimer's cases is projected to triple by 2050, according to U.S. Census data, and studies suggest somewhere between 40% and 60% of households that have someone with [dementia](#) also have a firearm.

"This issue is a big deal for the families and caregivers trying to navigate the best solution for their loved one or patient," said Emmy Betz, MD, MPH, associate professor of emergency medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and director of the project.

The Safety in Dementia website addresses the issue of firearms as well as two other important issues facing caregivers: driving and general home safety.

- For firearms, the [web tool](#) walks caregivers through things to consider in deciding how to limit firearm access for the person with dementia. It also provides them with a series of common solutions for safe [firearm](#) storage, including at-home and out-of-home options.
- For driving access, the tool provides strategies and solutions for guiding conversations and decisions that are difficult for those who have dementia.
- The site also provides general home safety tips and guidance into what caregivers can do in the kitchen, bathrooms, bedrooms, and other sections of the house to create a safer and more accessible home for those with dementia.

The materials, language and design of the firearms section of the website was created through a series of structured interviews with various

stakeholder groups. Clinicians, psychiatrists, caregivers, assisted living facility managers, and more were all interviewed to develop an accurate, compelling, and effective tool.

"Speaking with the groups impacted by firearms and dementia enabled us to create a tool that we believe will be effective in assisting caregivers making [difficult decisions](#) about home safety," said Daniel Matlock, MD, MPH, associate professor of medicine and geriatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, who worked on the web resource. "By developing a public resource, we hope that families and caregivers can have discussions and make decisions before potentially dangerous events occur."

Sara Gilloth, PsyD, geropsychologist at a private practice in Lakewood, CO, who works with people with dementia and family caregivers, said, "This is a great resource that is easy to use and provides several practical solutions that can be immediately implemented to increase safety. The tool can help guide difficult family discussions and decision making and can be accessed by the person with dementia in the earlier stages and also by family members across the progression of illness."

Gilloth adds, "The format of the website allows the user to quickly access information that is most relevant to the current safety concern, while also encouraging the user to think about other potential [safety](#) issues and respond proactively."

Provided by CU Anschutz Medical Campus

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