

Doctor training and other supports promote lifesaving firearm safety conversations in pediatrics offices

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Firearms are the number one cause of death in American children and adolescents, and new research shows that training programs and other supports help doctors consult parents on how to prevent these injuries.

The study abstract, "Improving Firearm Screening and Anticipatory Guidance During Well-Child Checks: A Resident-Led Quality Improvement Project," will be presented at the virtual American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition. Researchers found a program that offered free firearm locks for distribution, in addition to [educational materials](#) on firearm safety, increased the likelihood pediatricians would counsel parents about gun safety.

"Firearms are the number one cause of death in American children and adolescents. It is essential that pediatricians discuss firearm safety with families at well-child checks," said Alexandra Byrne, MD, the abstract author and a pediatric resident at the University of Florida, Gainesville. "With the rise in firearm sales and injuries during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever that pediatricians address the firearm epidemic."

The research showed that when a hospital offered gun safety materials and training, it had a significant impact on the [gun safety](#) conversations happening between doctors and parents:

- Pediatrician firearm screenings increased from 37.8% to 72.4%,
- Free firearm lock giveaways increased from 9.6% to 79.3%,
- Counseling that the safest home is one without firearms increased from 53.1% to 66.2%,
- Counseling on safe firearm storage increased from 88.0% to 93.1%.

This research is important, because previous studies have found that counseling and providing families with free firearm locks during visits increases safe storage practices and that safe storage reduces firearm injuries. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians ask about the presence of firearms in the home and discuss firearm [safety](#) at well-child visits.

"Our study demonstrates effective ways to improve [firearm](#) screening during well-child checks," Dr. Byrne said.

Dr. Byrne will present the study abstract at 1:10 p.m. CT Saturday, October 9, 2021.

More information: Abstract Title: Improving Firearm Screening and Anticipatory Guidance During Well-Child Checks: A Resident-Led Quality Improvement Project

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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