

Conversations about safe firearm storage at purchase can influence use of firearm locks

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Although cable locks—commonly distributed to prevent firearm injury and death—are included in many legal firearm purchases, research shows firearm owners [rarely prefer or use](#) these devices.

But a Rutgers study published in *Injury Epidemiology* found that [gun owners](#) who were told about cable locks at the time they purchased the firearm were more than twice as likely to use locking devices than those who weren't told about cable locks when they made these purchases.

"Simply placing a cable [lock](#) in a bag when somebody purchases a firearm likely has minimal impact, but a simple discussion mentioning that a lock was included may make enough of an impact to prompt the firearm owner to keep their firearms locked up when not in use," said Michael Anestis, executive director of the New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center at Rutgers and senior author of the study.

Anestis, an associate professor in the Rutgers School of Public Health, said 1,203 firearm-owning adults throughout the United States and 1,556 firearm-owning adults from Minnesota, Mississippi and New Jersey were surveyed. Nationally researchers found that those who were told about the cable locks each time they made a purchase were more than four times likely to use a locking device on their firearms.

"These finding highlight an important role for firearm retailers in keeping firearm owners, their loved ones and their communities safe," Anestis said.

Although cable locks and similar devices can't prevent all firearm injuries and deaths, research has shown that storing firearms unlocked and more readily accessible increases the risk of [all forms of gun violence](#). Lowering the odds that someone will access a firearm that they shouldn't access offers substantial promise as a method to prevent tragedies—whether that means preventing a child from picking up a firearm and unintentionally shooting themselves or creating a barrier between a firearm owner and their weapon during a moment of crisis, researchers insist.

According to Shelby Bandel, a doctoral student at the New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center and the lead author of the study, these findings indicate that firearm retailers are a pivotal component of effort to lower the risk of firearm injury and death.

"Encouraging retailers to notify firearm buyers about the included locking devices may be a scalable tool for increasing secure [firearm storage](#)," Bandel said. "A simple conversation about how and why to use a lock may very well save a life."

More information: Shelby L. Bandel et al, Interactions at the point of firearm purchase and subsequent use of locking devices, *Injury Epidemiology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1186/s40621-023-00421-0](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-023-00421-0)

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