

# Emergency departments saw firearm injuries in children double during pandemic

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Pediatric Emergency Department (ED) visits for firearm injuries doubled during the pandemic compared to earlier trends, according to a multicenter study published in the journal *Pediatrics*. During this time, deaths from firearm injuries in children and adolescents that occurred after arrival to the hospital also doubled—up from 3 percent of ED visits pre-pandemic to 6 percent of ED visits during the pandemic.

"With the pandemic we saw a drastic increase in firearm purchases, which might have led to the tragic spikes in injuries and deaths from firearms among children and [adolescents](#)," said lead author Jennifer Hoffmann, MD, MS, pediatric emergency medicine physician at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

Dr. Hoffmann and colleagues conducted a retrospective study of firearm injury ED visits for children younger than 18 years old at nine urban U.S. hospitals participating in the Pediatric Emergency Care Applied Research Network Registry before and during the pandemic (January 2017-February 2020 and March 2020-November 2022).

There were 1904 ED visits by children for [firearm injuries](#) during the study time frame. Half were by [older adolescents](#) (15-17 years old), two out of three firearm injury visits were by Black youth, and two out of three firearm injury visits were by youth from under-resourced neighborhoods.

During the pandemic, ED visits for firearm injuries were higher than expected for youth 10 years of age and older, for both female and [male patients](#), as well as for Latine and Black youth, while ED visits for firearm injuries did not substantially increase among White youth. Increases in firearm injury ED visits were seen in youth from under-resourced neighborhoods, as well as from wealthier areas.

"Increases in firearm injuries across socioeconomic groups indicate that no child in the U.S. is immune to the growing risks of firearm violence," said Dr. Hoffmann. "Evidence-based policy solutions are desperately needed to tackle this crisis. For example, child access prevention laws, which hold firearm owners liable if a child can or does access a firearm, are associated with decreased firearm deaths in [young people](#)."

Dr. Hoffmann adds, "To prevent youth firearm injuries, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends enactment and enforcement of child access prevention laws, as well as universal background checks, buyer regulations, extreme risk protection orders, and bans on semiautomatic military style weapons and high-capacity magazines."

**More information:** Jennifer Hoffmann et al, *Pediatrics* (2023).

Provided by Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

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