

Means Safety Messaging for Clinical Staff

Use the **GROW** Framework to talk with Veteran patients about means safety and options for safe firearm and medication storage:

Get ready

Reason for the discussion

Offer brief advice

We're here to help

***Get ready:* Consider important factors before having the conversation.**

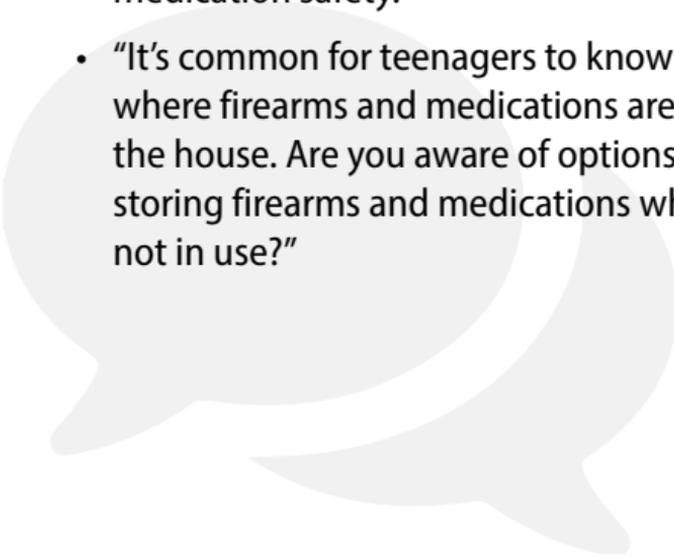
- How well do you know this patient?
- Does the patient live with other people?
- What is the patient's level of suicide risk?

VA



U.S. Department
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***Reason for the discussion:* Help the Veteran understand the rationale for the conversation.**

- "I'm glad you're not having thoughts about suicide, but sometimes a crisis hits, and people can experience suicidal feelings. There are some things you can do to help ensure your safety if that were to happen. Would it be OK if we talked about this for a minute?"
 - "Rates of suicide with firearms are high among Veterans, and depression can increase risk for suicide. I am talking with all of my patients with signs of depression about things they can do to stay safe, including about firearms and medication safety."
 - "It's common for teenagers to know exactly where firearms and medications are hidden in the house. Are you aware of options for safely storing firearms and medications when they are not in use?"
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Offer brief advice: Use collaborative language that empowers the Veteran to take steps toward improving safety.

- “Many firearm accidents in the home can be prevented by making sure firearms are kept unloaded and locked up, with ammunition stored in a separate location. Does this sound like something that could be helpful?”
- ***[Higher-risk patients:]*** “We know that putting time and distance between suicidal thoughts and firearms can save a life. Some Veterans choose to store their firearms away from home until they are feeling better. Is this something you might consider?”

We're here to help: Offer resources to reinforce behavior change.

- Firearms and medication safety brochure
- National Shooting Sports Foundation Safety Kit (www.NSSF.org/safety)
- Free firearm cable lock
- Information on how to reach the clinic and the Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255 and Press 1)

Firearm Storage Options



- Store unloaded firearms and ammunition separately.
- Use a gunlock.
- Store firearms in a safe, locking cabinet, or lockbox.
- Store firearms disassembled or remove the firing pin.
- Store firearms at the home of someone you trust.*

** State laws may limit temporary storage options. Confirm the laws in your state before making recommendations to Veterans.*

Medication Safety Recommendations

- Limit quantities of medications prescribed. If a patient is at higher risk, consider asking the patient to involve a family member or friend in medication management.
- Ask patients to:
 - Store medications in a secure area. If medications have abuse potential, consider a lockbox.
 - Dispose of any medication that is past its expiration date, is no longer needed, or has not been used in 12 months.
- Check with a local VA pharmacist about options and provide patients with this information.