Lethal Means Safety Counseling | Discharge Instructions for Patients & Families

Why does this matter? During a crisis, having quick access to lethal methods of suicide, especially firearms, increases the risk of death. Creating time and distance between a person and a lethal method saves lives.

For the individual to consider:

Firearms

Temporary storage options:

Away from home

- The safest option is to temporarily store firearms away from home.
- This could be with a trusted family member or friend, depending on what's legal in your state.
- Many gun shops, shooting ranges, pawn shops, or law enforcement agencies also offer gun storage.
- Find a shop that offers storage at https://gunstoragemap.com/
- Store the ammunition out of the home

At home:

- If firearms remain in the home, make sure you can't access them
- Store the gun securely, with a lock or in a lockbox or safe. Make sure you don't have the key or access code
- Store ammunition it in a separate, locked location for an extra layer of safety, or consider removing it from the home.

Other Lethal Methods

Medications/Drugs:

- Ask a family member or friend to hold and manage all medications. Make sure that access to needed medications is not disrupted but access to large amounts is prevented.
- Talk with your provider about prescribing smaller quantities
- Consider a lockbox for medications at home (available at most pharmacies and many online retailers, ~$15–$30)

Other items to secure or remove:

- Sharp objects (razors, knives) — store out of sight or remove from home
- Ropes, cords, or belts— reduce access or remove, especially if used before or part of a plan
- Alcohol and drugs — limit access, as they increase impulsivity

Ask your pharmacist:

- Pharmacists can often check your full medication list and advise on what poses the highest risk.

For families or significant others: How to talk with your loved one about this:

✓ Do say:

"We want you to consider this, because we love you and want you to be safe."
"This is temporary — just until things feel more stable."
"Can we agree to store the guns at [person/place] for now?"
"We can keep your medications for you and bring them as needed."

✗ Avoid:

"We're taking away your guns." (feels punitive)
"You can't be trusted." (shaming)
Arguments or ultimatums about firearm access
Assuming the crisis is "over" once they're home

If your loved one doesn't agree:

Don't argue. Stay calm. Ask again later.
Ask: "What would make you feel okay about trying this just for a week?"
You can still secure ammunition separately — this alone reduces risk.
Talk to your own provider or therapist for support.

Crisis Resources: 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call or text **988** | Crisis Text Line: text **HOME** to **741741** | Emergency: **911**

References

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