

# Guns and kids. Safety rules.

by Dr. Delia Chiamonte, [Baltimore Health Examiner](#)



In 2005, there were 77 firearm deaths of children and teens in Maryland. The recent Supreme Court decision liberalizing gun ownership has made me think about gun safety, particularly for children. I won't take a position on whether or not you should own a gun, but if you have one you have a responsibility to keep it out of the hands of kids.

Most fatal gun accidents occur when children or adolescents come upon a loaded, unsecured firearm, often in the home. So even if you fervently believe that we all have the right to bear arms, it is a serious decision to decide to keep a gun in your home – particularly if you have children or grandchildren.

If you have a gun:

- Unload it and lock it up
- Lock and store ammunition separately
- Hide keys where children can't find them

Even if you don't have a gun, you aren't totally off the hook. You still have a responsibility to help keep your kids safe from guns that they may encounter in the community. You can teach gun safety just as you teach street safety. And you can ask if there are guns in the home before you send your child to a friend's house for a playdate.

Be sure to tell your kids that if they find a gun they should:

- Stop!
- Don't touch
- Remove yourself from the area
- Tell an adult

You may have told your child not to touch a gun, but be sure that they know to remove themselves from the area in case another child can't control his or her curiosity.

Guns are a fact of life but with a little forethought we can all help to keep our kids safe from them.

Be safe,

Dr. C

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Dr. Chiamonte is a private Health Advocate and the founder of Insight Medical Consultants. She has been quoted by CNN, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today as an expert on patient advocacy.

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