

Team studies safe gun storage practices in military homes

August 16 2019



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Homes are the front lines of military suicide prevention as nearly two-thirds of suicides occur at home using a firearm—nearly always a personal firearm. Because suicide risk decreases if a firearm is safely

stored locked and unloaded researchers, led by Craig Bryan of the National Center for Veterans Studies at the University of Utah, surveyed military personnel to learn more about the relationship between safe firearm storage and thoughts of suicide or self-harm. Their results are published today in *JAMA Network Open*.

Only a third of the personnel surveyed kept a [firearm](#) in or around their home, Bryan and colleagues found, and only a third of those kept it stored locked up and unloaded. People who had thoughts of [suicide](#) or [self-harm](#), though, (about ten percent of the survey group) were less likely to keep a firearm at home—but those who did keep a firearm were less likely to store it safely.

"Around 70% of military suicides involve a firearm, so the topic is of great importance for those of us wanting to prevent military suicides." Bryan said. "Safe storage practices can reduce firearms suicides by up to half, just like seatbelts can reduce traffic fatalities. Storing guns in a safe or using other locking devices is a simple way for families to protect their loved ones from unexpected and unpredictable tragedy."

The survey is based on self-reported responses, the authors write, but the results suggest that emphasizing safe gun storage practices may aid the ongoing effort to stem military suicides.

More information: *JAMA Network Open* (2019). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.9160](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.9160)

Provided by University of Utah

Citation: Team studies safe gun storage practices in military homes (2019, August 16) retrieved 2 April 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-08-team-safe-gun-storage-military.html>

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