

Secure Medication Storage

Veterans, their family members, and their children are also at risk of harm from ingesting medications, including those not prescribed to them or greater quantities than prescribed. Medications should be safely and securely stored when not in use to prevent an intentional or unintentional overdose.

How to Store Medications

SECURE YOUR MEDICATIONS

- Keep medications out of children's sight and reach.
- Have a family member or trusted friend manage medication dosages.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to limit the number of refills or the quantity of medication.
- Discuss options for storing medications with your doctor.
- Portion out pills for a week and lock up the rest.

CHECK AND DISPOSE OF MEDICATIONS

- Inspect and dispose of any medications past the expiration date.
- Dispose of any medication unused in the past 12 months.

DISPOSE OF MEDICATIONS RESPONSIBLY

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about options for disposing of unused medications.
- Utilize VA Medication Take Back Days at your local VA Medical Center.
- Take unused medications to your local pharmacy.
- Request a medication return envelope from your VA prescriber.
- Locate a medication disposal site by using the locator tool provided by The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

<https://apps.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main>

If you are using prescribed or illicit opioid medications (e.g., fentanyl, oxycodone, morphine), ask your doctor for a prescription of Naloxone - an antidote for opioid drug overdose - and learn how to use and store it safely.

LEARN MORE AT:

https://www.pbm.va.gov/PBM/academicdetailingservice/Opioid_Overdose_Education_and_Naloxone_Distribution.asp

Resources



MILITARY DISCHARGE UPGRADE

If you experienced military sexual assault and received a discharge status of other than honorable, bad conduct, or dishonorable, you may be able to apply for a discharge upgrade. <https://www.va.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions/>

VA MENTAL HEALTH

https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/docs/Talking_with_a_Veteran_in_crisis.pdf

VA CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM DIRECTORY

The caregiver support line at: **1-855-260-3274**

- https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp
- <https://va.buildingbettercaregivers.org/>

PROGRAM OF GENERAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT SERVICES

https://www.caregiver.va.gov/Care_Caregivers.asp

Resources for Veterans Who Have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence and or Sexual Trauma

MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA

Approximately 1 in 3 women and 1 in 50 men report experiencing MST during their military service. If you or someone you know has experienced military sexual trauma, you can find resources at: <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome/vha-mst-coordinators.asp>

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)

The safety of yourself and other household members (e.g., children) is essential. IPV raises the risk of homicide for oneself and one's children, and talking to a partner who uses IPV may be unsafe. The VA IPV assistance program (IPVAP) offers help. See the website at: <https://www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV/Coordinators.asp>

If you, or someone you know, could be experiencing and/or using IPV, call The National Domestic Violence Hotline is also available at **1-800-799-7233** or **1-800-787-3224 (TTY)**.

Secure Firearm and Medication Storage for Women Veteran Family Members

You can protect the health and well-being of your family members by securely storing firearms and medications in your home.



How to Recognize Suicide Risk

There are resources you can use to protect yourself, your children, and your Veteran family member, particularly if you or others in the household are in crisis or are experiencing suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

SIGNS THAT SOMEONE MAY BE AT RISK OF SUICIDE:

- Talking or joking about death or suicide
- Feeling extremely sad, anxious, or angry
- Changes in behavior, such as withdrawing from friends or family, mood swings, or taking dangerous risks
- Using drugs or alcohol more often
- Feeling nervous, tired, or having physical pain or stress

How to Talk to Your Family Member About Suicide

If you are worried about a friend or Veteran family member, ask them directly about suicide and encourage them to seek help.

Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide can result in less thoughts of suicide and will not “put the idea in their head.” Some Veterans may find it embarrassing or shameful to talk about their mental health. If they refuse to talk, respect their privacy – but don’t be afraid to try again later.

HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

“I have noticed you haven’t been yourself lately, would you like to talk about it?”

“I’m concerned about you. Are you thinking about hurting or killing yourself?”

For more tips on how to talk to a Veteran about suicide risk, visit:

https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention

Secure Firearm Storage and Suicide Prevention for Women Veterans and their Families

- Nearly half of all Veterans own a firearm.
- Owning a firearm raises suicide risk 2 to 5 times for all household members and makes using firearms as a method of suicide more likely.
- 1 in 4 individuals attempt suicide within just five minutes of deciding to do so. Secure firearm storage prevents suicide by putting time and space between a person in crisis and a lethal method of self-harm, allowing for the crisis to resolve or lessen.

How to Keep Firearms Securely Stored



Keep firearms **unloaded** when not in use



Securely **lock** firearms with the **safety activated**



Use a cable/trigger lock or place in a secure lockbox



Store ammunition in a separate location from firearms



In times of crisis, ask a significant other to temporarily store household firearms



Talk to health, primary care, or reproductive health provider about firearm access and storage

How to Talk to Your Family About Secure Firearm Storage

Some family members of Veterans live in a household with a firearm that is not in their possession and may feel they do not have a say over how it is stored. However, just like having a plan for a fire, tornado, or other emergencies, having a plan for firearm storage helps keep everyone in the home prepared and safe.

HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

“I heard a story on the news that made me want to ask – do you have any firearms? How are they stored?”

“The kids are excited to come visit you! Before we come over, I wanted to check if you had firearms and if so, how do you store them?”

Further tips on how to ask your Veteran family member about firearm storage can be found at:

<https://besmartforkids.org>

<https://besmartforkids.org/secure-gun-storage/resources/#asking-about-secure-gun-storage>



CABLE LOCK
Price: \$10-\$50



LOCKBOX
Price: \$25-\$350



GUN SAFE
Price: \$200-\$2,500

Visit <http://keepitsecure.net> for additional secure firearm storage options.

To request a gun lock from your local VA medical facility, visit:

<https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>