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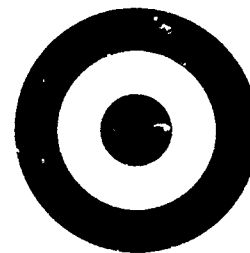
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ABSTRACT

Children are at risk of being killed or injured by a gun if their parents own a gun because many guns obtained for self-defense are kept loaded and within reach of children. This brief fact sheet presents statistical information relating to accidental deaths involving young people and firearms. Safety measures are suggested for preventing accidental shootings, such as keeping guns locked up and requiring trigger locks or loading indicators. Support is given for stricter gun control legislation affecting gun manufacturers. Includes one graph on unintentional firearm mortality rates by gender and age group. (RB)

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# Firearm Facts

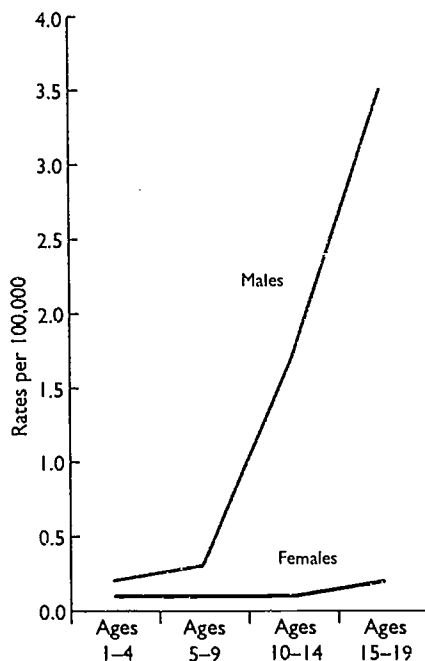


## UNINTENTIONAL GUN DEATHS AMONG CHILDREN

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Unintentional Firearm Mortality Rates per 100,000, by Gender and Age Group, 1991  
(Unpublished data, Lois Fingerhut, NCHS)

Unintentional firearm-caused deaths are a small percentage of all firearm-caused deaths among children. Most can be prevented. Children are at risk of being killed or injured by a gun if their parents own a gun because many guns obtained for self-defense are kept loaded and within reach of children.

**In 1990, 4,941 children in the United States under the age of 19 years died from gunshot wounds; 538 of these children were shot unintentionally.<sup>1</sup>**

For every unintentional gun death, there are at least five non-fatal injuries.<sup>2,3</sup> Gun injuries include permanent disabilities such as blindness, loss of limbs, or paralysis. Almost all of these shootings are preventable.

**Most children unintentionally kill themselves or other children while they are playing with a gun they found in their home or the home of a family member or friend.<sup>4</sup>**

A child who shoots another child is also a victim of gun violence.

**Boys are more likely to be shot and killed unintentionally than are girls, and they are most at risk from 15 to 19 years old.<sup>5</sup>**

Gun-owning parents generally trust teenage boys with guns.<sup>6</sup>

**Over half of all handgun owners keep their guns loaded at least some of the time.<sup>7</sup> In one study, 53% of gunowners surveyed did not keep their guns locked up.<sup>8</sup>**

An easily accessible loaded gun may put a family in danger rather than protect it. A gun in the home is more likely to result in the unintentional shooting death of a member of the household than in the self-defense shooting death of an intruder.<sup>9</sup>

**An estimated 30% of all unintentional shootings could be prevented by the presence of two safety features: trigger locks and loading indicators.<sup>10</sup>** In a report to the U.S. Senate, the U.S. General Accounting Office found that every single unintentional shooting in which a child under the age of six killed themselves or others could have been prevented by a childproof safety device.<sup>10</sup>

**Few guns have trigger locks and loading indicators because no law requires them.<sup>11</sup>**

Most gun control laws in the United States target gun users rather than gun manufacturers. For instance, some states are trying to prevent unintentional shootings by passing laws which hold gun owners responsible if a child kills himself, herself, or another person with an improperly stored firearm. Requiring gun manufacturers to include a trigger lock on every gun manufactured would automatically and effectively prevent a great number of unintentional firearm deaths.

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