

# MEANS REDUCTION SAVES LIVES.

A number of studies have indicated that when lethal means are made less available suicide rates decline.

- Many suicide attempts occur with little planning during a short-term crisis.
- Intent isn't all that determines whether a person lives or dies; means also matter.
- 90% of attempters who survive do NOT go on to die by suicide later.
- Access to firearms is a risk factor for suicide.
- Firearms used in youth suicide usually belong to a parent.
- Reducing access to lethal means saves lives.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAMILIES** - If you're concerned that a member of your household may be suicidal or suffering from depression, there are steps you can take to help keep them safe!

## REDUCE EASY ACCESS TO POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS MEANS IN THE HOME SUCH AS:

**MEDICATIONS** - Don't keep lethal doses at home. Your doctor, pharmacist, or the poison control center (1-800-222-1222) may be able to help you determine safe quantities for the medicines you need to keep on hand.

**ALCOHOL** - Alcohol can both increase the chance that a person makes an unwise choice and increases the likelihood of attempting suicide when depressed. Keep only small quantities at home and in a locked cabinet when possible.

**FIREARMS** - Because firearms are the most lethal means among suicide methods, it is particularly important that you store them until things improve at home or lock them very securely. Guns are more lethal than any other suicide means because they are quick, often times accessible and they are irreversible.

If you suspect someone you care about may be suicidal:

- Talk with the person. A discussion about removing lethal means can communicate that you care enough to take that extra step to ensure their safety.
- Ask to store the firearms from the person's home. This is not about confiscation; it is a life-saving precaution. Guns will be returned once the crisis is resolved.

*"There are two ways to reduce suicide: You can make it harder for them to die in an attempt, or you can heal underlying distress. The idea is to restrict methods that are the most lethal, to provide a second chance."*

- Dr. Matthew Miller, the associate director of the Harvard Injury Control Research Center at the Harvard School of Public Health.

*\*We recognize that firearm access can be a politically-charged topic. We welcome both gun owners and non-gun owners to visit [www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/) for more information. We support the right to own firearms.*

