

# Gun Safety and the Elderly

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In the same ways that some elderly drivers prove dangerous behind the wheel, **firearms** also prove dangerous in the hands of some elderly individuals. One recent study of elderly gun owners found that many had debated placing restrictions on firearm access as they age, even though they often do not have detailed plans for how to implement these restrictions. Because 40% of older Americans report living in a home with a firearm, it's become more important than ever to address the issue of control among the at-risk elderly. For example, if an elderly individual develops either dementia or depression and has easy access to a firearm, that elderly individual might end up harming themselves. This article reviews some critical advice to remember about gun control and the elderly.

## Realizing When Gun Ownership Becomes Too Dangerous

One of the most difficult questions presented by firearm ownership among the elderly is recognizing cognitive and physical signs that a firearm should be taken away from your loved one. The case of cognitive impairment, however, is often a challenge to recognize. Cognitive impairment due to Alzheimer's or a mental health disorder are some of the biggest warning signs that you should consider taking a firearm away from the elderly individual. One **study** even found that over 100 incidents that occurred from 2012 to 2012 involved people with dementia who had used firearms to either kill or injure themselves or others. Besides mental health, there are also several physical signs that an elderly individual should not carry a firearm. For example, an elderly individual might not be able to safely maintain or use a firearm.

## Firearm Ownership Advice the Elderly Should Follow

If an elderly loved one decides that owning a firearm is still a good idea for them, they should remember to follow some important firearm advice which includes:

- Selecting the right firearm is critical. This process involves selecting a firearm that the elderly individual can both handle in regards to dexterity and strength.
- After selecting an appropriate firearm, the elderly individual should learn how to handle the firearm in the safest way possible. To make sure that the elderly individual remains safe, it might be a good idea for the loved one to enroll in a firearm safety class.
- Make sure that the elderly individual knows when it is appropriate as well as when it is not appropriate to use a firearm. One of the other factors that could end up impacting the loved one's ability to safely wield a firearm is whether that individual knows to assess a viable threat.
- The elderly individual should know when it is appropriate to tell someone that they have a firearm. For example, if the elderly individual has a guest overnight, they should make sure to tell this individual they have a firearm.