

Father's Day June 21, 2009, is National ASK Day.

ASK (Asking Saves Kids) reminds parents about the importance of asking if there are guns in the homes where children play.

In America, nearly 1.7 million children live in a home with a loaded, unlocked gun, and a staggering 40 percent of homes with children have a gun. More than 41,000 children and teens in Wisconsin live in homes with loaded guns, and nearly 15,000 children live in homes with guns that are loaded *and* unlocked.*

On Sunday, June 21, 2009, organizations and individuals around the country will celebrate National ASK (Asking Saves Kids) Day. Held annually on the first day of summer, a time of year when children play more often in other homes, ASK Day reminds parents about the importance of asking if there are guns in the homes where their children play.

The Wisconsin Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics (WIAAP) suggests that pediatricians participate in ASK Day this year by incorporating the ASK concept into their injury prevention discussions during complete, well-child exams. Parents ask all sorts of questions to protect their children when they go play at the home of a friend, neighbor or caregiver.

However, there is one important question that more than half of parents say it never even occurred to them to ask: "Is there a gun in your home?" If the answer is no, that is one less thing to worry about. If the answer is yes, parents are urged to ensure that the guns are stored locked and separate from ammunition, preferably in a gun safe. Hiding guns is not enough. There are countless tragic stories of kids finding guns that parents thought were well hidden or safely stored. If there are any doubts about the safety of someone else's home, the parent should politely insist the children play at their own house instead.

More information is available at www.askingsaveskids.org

*Data Source: *Pediatrics*, the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Findings >From the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2002, published 2005

Our thanks to Carl Eisenberg, MD, FAAP for his work on this initiative