

# Dementia & Firearm

# SAFETY



## What is Dementia?

There are many different forms of Dementia, all referring to problems with the brain. **Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)** is an early change in the brain that may eventually lead to Dementia but sometimes resolves.

## Is Alzheimer's Disease the same as MCI? <sup>1</sup>

**MCI is not as severe as Alzheimer Disease (AD)**, the most common form of Dementia or other **AD-related Dementias (ADRD)**. People living with MCI are more likely to develop AD or ADRD, but sometimes the condition may improve or remain the same.

## 10 Early Signs<sup>2</sup> of Alzheimer's Disease or other Dementia:

- 1 Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- 2 Challenges in planning or solving problems
- 3 Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- 4 Confusion with time or place
- 5 Trouble understanding visual images & spatial relationships
- 6 New problems with words in speaking or writing
- 7 Misplacing things & losing the ability to retrace steps
- 8 Decreased or poor judgement
- 9 Withdrawal from work or social activities
- 10 Changes in mood & personality

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON



HARBORVIEW  
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## Why are we concerned about Firearm Safety for Persons with Dementia (PWD)?

**Safety is a major concern for PWD**—they are at greater risk of injury due to the potential for problems with memory, judgement, and mood. Approximately 40% of older adults have access to a firearm at home.

## Firearms are the most COMMON & DEADLY mechanism used for suicide by Older Adults

*Firearms are used with **increased frequency** as a person ages*

## Persons with Dementia (PWD)

*have **suicide mortality rates***

**1.5x** GREATER THAN  
*Persons **without** Dementia*

## What can care partners or family do to promote Firearm Safety?

**Discussing firearm safety with your loved ones is important.** Schedule a time to meet and prepare a discussion template to help facilitate the conversation. Guides such as the **University of Colorado's Firearm Life Plan** offer ready-made documents to help plan for firearm safety.

**Conversations should start BEFORE any signs of memory loss or cognitive impairment begin**—but talking with your loved one can still be helpful if they have been diagnosed with MCI or Dementia.

**If there is an immediate safety risk,** our **Three Interventions Toolkit** may be helpful to care partners or family who must immediately remove the firearm from their loved one's home.



[hiprc.org/dementia-firearm-safety](https://hiprc.org/dementia-firearm-safety)

<sup>1</sup> What Is Mild Cognitive Impairment? | National Institute on Aging ([nih.gov](https://www.nih.gov))

<sup>2</sup> Memory Loss & 10 Early Signs of Alzheimer's ([alz.org](https://www.alz.org))