

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? ¹

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 Signs² 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

¹ What Is Mild Cognitive Impairment? | National Institute on Aging (nih.gov)

² Memory Loss & 10 Early Signs of Alzheimer's (alz.org)

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HARBORVIEW
INJURY PREVENTION & RESEARCH CENTER

FIPRP | Firearm Injury & Policy
Research Program

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