



For Immediate Release

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One simple question can save a child's life *So, why aren't more parents asking it?*

(June 15, 2009 – San Antonio, TX) National ASK (Asking Saves Kids) Day is Saturday, June 21, 2009 and this year's theme, "One Simple Question, Thousands of Reasons to ASK," is a reference to the single question that could save thousands of children from serious injury or death. That question, "Is there a gun in your home?" is one every parent should be asking the parents of their children's friends, but less than half have ever done so.

In fact, while 78 percent of parents say they would be concerned if they knew there was a gun where their child played, less than 50 percent say they have ever asked the parents of their child's friends if they have one. "Picking up the phone or knocking on your neighbor's door to ask may be uncomfortable, but think about the peace of mind knowing the answer would provide," said Dr. Ronald Stewart, trauma medical director at University Hospital at a media conference kicking off San Antonio's National Ask Day educational campaign. "Or worse, think about how you would feel if your child found a gun at a neighbor's home and shot himself or someone else. I'm sure most parents would rather be a little uncomfortable asking a question, than living through that kind of nightmare."

Talking to your child is important, but telling them of the dangers of firearms is not enough. Children are naturally curious. "If a gun is accessible in someone's home, there is a good chance a child will find it and play with it," said San Antonio Police Chief William McManus. "And parents who think there are not that many people keeping guns in their homes should know that more Americans have guns than dogs. Nearly 1.7 million children under the age of 18 live in homes with firearms."

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June 21 is the first day of summer, a time when millions of children are out playing in other homes in their neighborhoods. Unfortunately, it's also a time when the rate of unintentional gun shot wounds increases as these children come across loaded weapons.

One simple question: "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.

University Health System, in partnership with the San Antonio Police Department and San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, is encouraging parents to "ASK" this week by distributing materials to both parents and children at University Hospital and its network of community clinics. DVDs containing two dramatic, even shocking, public service announcements will also be distributed to local media outlets. While some parents might find these television spots disturbing, they certainly won't forget them.

"National Ask Day provides an opportunity to highlight this serious health problem at the start of the summer," said Jennifer Herriott, Metro Health's population-based services area administrator. "But the take home message from today's event should be that parents need to be asking this question routinely, before their child spends any time in the home of a friend, relative or caregiver."

More information on National Ask Day is available online at www.paxusa.org.