

## **Join Atrium Health Navicent in Raising Awareness About the Prevention of Firearm Injuries in Children**

*In 2019, 185 children died due to firearm incidents in Georgia*

**MACON, Ga., June 20, 2022** – Atrium Health Navicent is participating in the Georgia Stay SAFE campaign by helping raise awareness about the prevention of firearm injuries in children and take steps to ensure guns are stored safely.

In 2019, there were 563 emergency department visits for unintentional shootings involving children and teens in Georgia. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 185 children died due to firearm incidents in Georgia in 2019. The American Academy of Pediatrics has reported a nationwide surge in firearm injuries in young children and firearms injuries inflicted by young children since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Anytime we have a firearm injury or death of a child, it is very devastating. Not only is it terribly hurtful to their families, but also to their communities that loved them and those who were involved in their care,” said Dr. Dennis Ashley, Director of Trauma for Atrium Health Navicent The Medical Center. “While our trauma team is prepared to help treat these injuries, it’s important that we do all we can to prevent them from happening.”

Georgia Stay SAFE stands for a series of gun safety tips:

- **Secure Firearm Storage:** Gun owners are urged to store firearms unloaded and in a secure, locked location such as a safe with ammunition locked separately.
- **Ask Before Play:** Before sending a child to another person’s home, ask if firearms are stored unloaded and locked.
- **Focus on Safety:** Parents and guardians are urged to talk to children and teenagers about gun safety and instruct them in what they should do if they find a gun. Children and teens should be instructed to 1) Stop, 2) Don’t touch the gun, 3) Leave the area, and 4) Tell an adult.
- **End Firearm Injury:** Firearm injuries can be prevented if we work together to stay SAFE.

“It’s important that we do all we can to protect children from firearms injuries and to begin that protection early,” said Dr. Jacob Kirkpatrick, a pediatric emergency center physician at Atrium Health Navicent Beverly Knight Olson Children’s Hospital. “Children as young as three years old may be strong enough to pull the trigger of a handgun, causing unintended, but devastating injuries to themselves or others.”

### **About Atrium Health Navicent**

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of healthcare in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation’s leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit [www.NavicentHealth.org](http://www.NavicentHealth.org).

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