



Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among adolescents.

Risk factors:

- **Mental illness** (depression)
- **Substance abuse**, which can cause mental highs and lows that exacerbate suicidal thoughts
- **Intoxication** (more than one in three people who die from suicide are found to be intoxicated)
- **Access to firearms** (the majority of completed suicides involve the use of a firearm)
- **Chronic medical illness**
- **Gender** (though more women than men attempt suicide, men are 4 times more likely to die by suicide)
- **History of trauma**
- **Isolation**
- **Age** (people under age 24 or above age 65 are at a higher risk for suicide)
- **Recent tragedy or loss**
- **Agitation and sleep deprivation**

Warning Signs

- **Talking about suicide** – Any talk about suicide, dying, or self-harm, such as "I wish I hadn't been born," "If I see you again..." and "I'd be better off dead."
 - Threats or comments about killing themselves, also known as suicidal ideation, can begin with seemingly harmless thoughts like "I wish I wasn't here" but can become more overt and dangerous
- **Seeking out lethal means** – Seeking access to guns, pills, knives, or other objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
- **Preoccupation with death** – Unusual focus on death, dying, or violence. Preoccupation with talking, writing, or thinking about death.
- **No hope for the future** – Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and being trapped ("There's no way out"). Belief that things will never get better or change.
- **Self-loathing, self-hatred** – Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, shame, and self-hatred. Feeling like a burden ("Everyone would be better off without me").
- **Withdrawing from others** – Withdrawing from friends, family, and community. Increasing social isolation. Desire to be left alone.
- **Self-destructive behavior** – Increased alcohol or drug use. Impulsive and reckless behaviors. Taking unnecessary risks as if they have a "death wish." Increased aggression.
- **Dramatic mood swings** – Instability.
- **Getting affairs in order** – Making out a will. Giving away prized possessions. Making arrangements for family members.
- **Saying goodbye** – Unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends. Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again.

- **Sudden sense of calm** – A sudden sense of calm and happiness after being extremely depressed can mean that the person has made a decision to attempt suicide.

Imminent Danger?

Suicidal thoughts or behaviors are both damaging and dangerous. Someone experiencing these thoughts should seek immediate assistance from an adult or health or mental health care provider who can help assess risk.

Help a Friend

- **Know** the warning signs
- **ALWAYS** take suicidal comments seriously
- Trust your instincts that the person may be in trouble
- **Talk** with the person about your concerns
- **Listen**
- Make **NO** deals
- **Tell** an adult

Help Yourself

- **Talk** to someone, **Don't** keep suicidal feelings to yourself
- **Make** a safety plan, **Ensure** a safe environment
- **Therapy** can help a person with thoughts of suicide recognize unhealthy patterns of thinking and behavior, validate troubling feelings, and learn coping skills.
- **Medication** can be used if necessary to treat underlying depression and anxiety and can lower a person's risk of hurting themselves.

Resources

- <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/>
- <http://yourockfoundation.org/>
- <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/mental-health-screening-tools>
- <http://www.suicideispreventable.org/>
- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/cryforhelp/featured/resources-hotlines-and-web-sites-for-teens/11/>

