

# Suicide Awareness and Prevention

## Suicide

Some people who have mental and physical health problems may consider suicide. They may feel that life is not worth living or the world would be better off without them.

Suicide is often an impulsive act. Not everyone who attempts suicide talks about it or leaves suicide notes. It is important to know the signs and symptoms of suicide as well as understand the risk factors.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, talk to a health care provider or a trusted family member or friend. In a crisis, call 911.

## Who is at Risk for Suicide

No one can predict suicide, but it is possible to identify people who may be at an increased risk. People at risk for suicide include those who:

- have had previous suicide attempts
- have guns in their homes
- abuse alcohol, prescription medicines or illegal drugs
- have a mental illness (such as bipolar disorder, major depression or schizophrenia)
- have a history of violence or abuse
- have had a sudden, major loss or a stressful situation such as a divorce, death, financial crisis, school or job pressures

- have a family history of mental illness, alcoholism or substance abuse
- have recently had a hospital stay for depression or other mental health reasons.

A teenager may be at a high risk for suicide if:

- he or she recently broke up with a girlfriend or boyfriend
- a classmate or role model has died by suicide or another cause.

## Warning Signs of Suicide

The following are warning signs of suicide:

- talking, joking or writing about suicide
- changes in appetite and weight
- sleep problems (such as not enough or too much sleep)
- wanting to be left alone
- thoughts about death or suicide
- acting with reckless behavior
- losing interest in personal hygiene
- giving away personal items
- mood swings
- feeling hopeless, like no one cares, or that no one can help
- wanting to join a loved one who has died.

## Ways to Reduce the Risk of Suicide

It is important to create a safe environment for yourself or a loved one when there is high risk for suicide. The following actions may help reduce suicide risk.

- Arrange to have guns and other weapons removed from your home.
- Make and keep all appointments with medical and psychiatric health care providers.
- Avoid using drugs and alcohol.
- Take medicines as prescribed.
- Learn skills for conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Talk with someone you trust.
- Create a safety plan. (See the last section.)

If you are feeling suicidal:

- **Call 911 for help right away or go to the nearest Emergency Department.**
- Call a crisis line or someone who can provide support.

## Crisis Numbers and Resources

You do not need to fear help, feel ashamed because you need help, or be afraid to ask for help. The following is a partial listing of resources.

- 911 (for emergency medical help)
- 411 (for phone numbers of local crisis centers)
- Allina Health Mental Health  
[allinahealth.org/mentalhealth](http://allinahealth.org/mentalhealth)
- National Hopeline Network  
(phone counseling and resources)  
1-800-784-2433 ([hopeline.com](http://hopeline.com))
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
(phone counseling and resources)  
1-800-273-8255  
([suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org))

- National Alliance on Mental Illness  
Minnesota (information and support)  
1-800-950-6264 ([namihelps.org](http://namihelps.org))

## How to Create a Safety Plan

Creating a safety plan with the help of health care providers, family and friends can help reduce the risk of suicide. Noticing symptoms early and taking action is important.

Write down the names and phone numbers of whom you can call when you are concerned for your safety.

Local crisis line: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Doctor or therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Case manager: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Family member: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Friend: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_