

If you or someone you know is in an emergency, call The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or call 911 immediately.

Each year more than 34,000 individuals take their own life, leaving behind thousands of friends and family members to navigate the tragedy of their loss. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death among adults in the U.S. and the 3rd leading cause of death among adolescents.

Suicidal thoughts or behaviors are both damaging and dangerous and are therefore considered a psychiatric emergency. Someone experiencing these thoughts should seek immediate assistance from a health or mental health care provider.

Know the Warning Signs

Identifying the suicide warning signs is the first step towards protecting your loved one.

- 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
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive behavior. A person who’s feeling suicidal may experience higher levels of aggression and rage than they are used to.
- Social withdrawal from friends, family and the community.
- Dramatic mood swings indicate that your loved one is not feeling stable and may feel suicidal.
- Preoccupation with talking, writing or thinking about death.
- Impulsive or reckless behavior.

Is There Imminent Danger?

Any person exhibiting these behaviors should get care immediately: They are putting their affairs in order and giving away their possessions They are saying goodbye to friends and family Their mood shifts from despair to calm They start planning, possibly by looking around to buy, steal or borrow the tools they need to commit suicide such as a firearm or prescription medication A licensed mental health professional can help assess risk.

Who is at Risk for Suicide?

Research has found that about 90% of individuals who die by suicide experience mental illness. Oftentimes it is undiagnosed or untreated. Experiencing a mental illness is the number one risk factor for suicide.

A number of things may put a person at risk of suicide:

- **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**

Can Thoughts of Suicide Be Prevented?

Psychotherapy such as cognitive behavioral therapy and dialectical behavior 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. Depending on the person's mental health diagnosis, other medications can be used to alleviate symptoms.

See more at: <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Related-Conditions/Risk-of-Suicide>

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