



## Teen Suicide

### IDENTIFYING WARNING SIGNS AND WAYS TO RESPOND

Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs – some more subtle, others more pronounced. Parents, friends, and other trusted adults are in a key position to identify the signs and get help. **Suicide is preventable.**

Talking openly and honestly about emotional distress and suicide is okay. It will not make someone more suicidal or put the idea of suicide in their mind. While teens who feel suicidal are not likely to seek help directly, knowing how to acknowledge and respond when thoughts of emotional distress or suicide are shared with you is important.

**SUICIDE IS THE  
2<sup>ND</sup> LEADING  
CAUSE**

**of death among  
teens and young  
adults 15 to 19  
years of age**

### Risk Factors Associated with an Increased Likelihood of Suicidal Thoughts

- ✓ Mental illness (e.g. depression, conduct disorder) or substance abuse
- ✓ Environmental risks, including presence of a firearm in the home
- ✓ Family stress/dysfunction
- ✓ Situational crises (e.g., traumatic death of a loved one, physical or sexual abuse, family violence, bullying)

## Underage Drinking and Teen Suicide

Pre-teens who drink alcohol are substantially more likely to be involved in violent behavior as adolescents and young adults. In fact, research has shown that high-risk teens who drink alcohol underage are three times more likely than their non-drinking peers to attempt suicide, and those who begin drinking before age 13 are more likely to also be victims of dating and peer violence.



## WARNING SIGNS

- Suicidal threats in the form of direct statements such as, "I am going to kill myself"
- Suicidal threats in the form of indirect statements such as, "I wish I could fall asleep and never wake up again"
- Suicide notes and plans, including messages and posts shared online
- Prior suicidal behavior
- Making final arrangements (e.g., making funeral arrangements, writing a will, giving away prized possessions)
- Preoccupation with death
- Changes in behavior, appearance, thoughts and/or feelings

## HOW TO RESPOND

- Remain calm
- Ask the teen directly if he or she is thinking about suicide
- Focus on your concern for their well-being and avoid accusations
- Listen attentively
- Reassure them that there is help and they will not feel like this forever
- Do not judge them or their thoughts
- Offer to stay with them. Do not leave the teen alone
- Offer to go with them to get help or contact a crisis line
- Remove means for self-harm
- Never keep what you've heard a secret
- Seek help from school or community mental health resources as soon as possible

### **If you or someone you know is struggling with thoughts of suicide, get help now.**

- Talk with a friend, family member, counselor, or therapist
- Text "START" to 741741
- Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Kids Health. About teen suicide. Retrieved from: <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/suicide.html#>

Georgia State University Institute of Public Health (2008). New research links teen alcohol use with suicide. Retrieved from: <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-02-links-teen-alcohol-suicide.html#jCp>

Helpguide.org. Parents Guide to Teen Depression: Recognizing the signs of depression in teens and how to help. Retrieved from: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/teen-depression-signs-help.htm?pdf=true>