



Suicide prevention: know the signs

Understanding the risk factors and warning signs of suicide may help you save a life.

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. In 2020, nearly 46,000 people died by suicide.¹ Often people feel uneasy about the topic of suicide because they don't know much about it. Here are some facts that may help you understand more.

Risk factors

Anyone can be at risk for suicidal thinking and behavior. There's no one thing that leads to suicide. But a combination of issues together can increase risk. Here are some of the factors that can put a person at risk of suicide:²

- Previous suicide attempt or family history of suicide
- Mental illness such as depression or anxiety
- Social isolation
- Job loss or financial problems
- Impulsivity
- Legal problems
- Serious illness
- Substance use disorder
- Relationship problems
- History of abuse or bullying
- Easy access to lethal means such as firearms and medications

¹[Facts about suicide](#). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed July 2022

²[Risk and Protective Factors](#). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed July 2022

Protective factors

There are also things individuals and communities do that may help protect people from suicidal thoughts and behavior. These are called protective factors. They include:²

- Coping and problem-solving skills
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide
- Connections to friends, family and community support
- Access to medical and mental health care
- Limited access to lethal means among people at risk

Warning signs

Many people who attempt suicide give warning signs. Here are some common signs that someone may be thinking about suicide:³

- Talking about wanting to die or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling hopeless
- Looking for ways to kill themselves such as searching online or buying a gun
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Saying that they're a burden to others
- Giving away important items or saying goodbye
- Sleeping more or less
- Sudden calmness after a period of depression
- Taking dangerous risks such as driving too fast
- Using alcohol or drugs more often

Prevention

Take it seriously if someone you know shows these warning signs, especially if the behaviors are new or have increased recently. Show concern and ask the person if they are okay. Assume that you are the only person who will check on them.

Ask them if they're having thoughts of killing or hurting themselves. That question can open a conversation. And often people who are suicidal feel a great sense of relief when someone asks.

Reach out for help

Help the person reach out to their doctor or a therapist. You can call **988**, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and a counselor will connect you to the nearest crisis center.

If someone says that they're suicidal and have a plan to do it, call **911** or take them to the nearest emergency room. Stay with them if it's safe for you to do so.

By learning more about mental health issues and suicide you can make a difference. You can help reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. And you can support someone who is considering ending their life.

³Warning signs of suicide. National Institute of Mental Health. Accessed July 2022

²Risk and Protective Factors. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed July 2022

The EAP is administered by Resources For Living, LLC.

All EAP calls are confidential, except as required by law. Information is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a professional. Contact a professional with any questions about specific needs. There may be other explanations for any or all of the above [behaviors/ characteristics/ symptoms]. This information is not a complete list of all signs concerning such [behaviors/ characteristics/ symptoms] and should not be used as a stand-alone instrument.