

Suicide in Children and Teens

Common warning signs for suicide include:

- Making suicidal statements.
- Being preoccupied with death in conversation, writing, or drawing.
- Giving away belongings.
- Withdrawing from friends and family.
- Having aggressive or hostile behavior.

It is extremely important that you **take all threats of suicide seriously** and seek immediate treatment for your child or teenager. If you are a child or teen and have these feelings, talk with your parents, an adult friend, or your doctor right away to get some help.

Other warning signs can include:

- Neglecting personal appearance.
- Running away from home.
- Risk-taking behavior, such as reckless driving or being sexually promiscuous.
- A change in personality (such as from upbeat to quiet).

Certain problems increase the chances of suicidal thoughts in children and teens. Other problems may trigger a suicide attempt.

Problems that increase the chances of **suicidal thoughts** include having:

- Depression or another mental health problem, such as bipolar disorder (manic-depressive illness) or schizophrenia.
- A parent with depression or substance abuse problems.
- Tried suicide before.
- A friend, peer, family member, or hero (such as a sports figure or musician) who recently attempted or committed suicide.
- A disruptive or abusive family life.
- A history of sexual abuse.
- A history of being bullied.

Problems that may trigger a **suicide attempt** in children and teens include:

- Possession or purchase of a weapon, pills, or other means of inflicting self-harm.
- Drug or alcohol use problems.
- Witnessing the suicide of a family member.
- Problems at school, such as falling grades, disruptive behavior, or frequent absences.
- Loss of a parent or close family member through death or divorce.
- Legal or discipline problems.
- Stress caused by physical changes related to puberty, chronic illness, and/or sexually transmitted diseases.

- Withdrawing from others and keeping thoughts to themselves.
- Uncertainty surrounding sexual orientation (such as bisexuality or homosexuality).
- End of an important romantic relationship.

Depression

Signs of depression, which can lead to suicidal behavior, include:

- Feeling sad, empty, or tearful nearly every day.
- Loss of interest in activities that were enjoyed in the past.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Difficulty thinking and concentrating.
- Complaints of continued boredom.
- Complaints of headaches, stomachaches, or fatigue with no actual physical problems.
- Expressions of guilt and/or not allowing anyone to give him or her praise or rewards.