

Suicide Prevention Fact Sheet

The Scope of the Problem

- For young people 10-24 years old, suicide is the second leading cause of death, behind unintentional injury and homicide.
- Over the past decade, more teenagers and young adults died of suicide than from cancer, heart disease, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia and influenza, and chronic lung disease combined.
- Important risk factors for attempted suicide in youth are depression, aggressive or disruptive behaviors, and alcohol or drug use/abuse.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide in young people between the ages of 10 and 24 results in 4,600 lives lost in the U.S. each year.
- The suicides rate in the U.S. jumped 30 percent from 2000 to 2016; among females it increased 50 percent.
- According to the journal JAMA Pediatrics, the rate of suicides for black children ages 5 to 12 from 2000 to 2016 exceeded that of young whites.
- Although suicide among young children is a rare event, the dramatic increase in the rate among 10 to 14-year-olds underscores the urgent need for intensifying efforts to prevent suicide among persons in this age group.
- In a survey of over 14,000 students in 144 schools, the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System found that 17.2% of students had seriously considered attempting suicide during the 12 months before the survey. The prevalence of having seriously considered attempting suicide was higher among female (22.1%) than male (11.9%) students.
- Analyses based on the question ascertaining sexual identity indicated that nationwide, 13.3% of heterosexual students and 47.7% of gay, lesbian had seriously considered attempting suicide

Sources: Surgeon General's Office and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

What To Look For

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, many of the symptoms of suicidal feelings are similar to those of depression. Parents should be aware of the following signs of adolescents:

- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
- Violent actions, rebellious behavior, or running away
- Drug and alcohol use
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance
- Marked personality change
- Persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork
- Frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Not tolerating praise or rewards

A teenager who is planning to commit suicide may:

- Complain of being a bad person or feeling "rotten inside"
- Give verbal hints with statements such as: "I won't be a problem for you much longer," "Nothing matters," "It's no use," and "I won't see you again"
- Put his or her affairs in order, for example, give away favorite possessions, clean his or her room, throw away important belongings, etc.

- Become suddenly cheerful after a period of depression
- Have signs of psychosis (hallucinations or bizarre thoughts)

If a child or adolescent says, "I want to kill myself," or "I'm going to commit suicide," always take the statement seriously and seek evaluation from a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other physician.

Source: The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

What To Do

The following are some suggestions for helping teens who may be suicidal or having suicidal thoughts:

- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Take action. Remove means, such as guns or pills.
- Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

Source: American Association Of Suicidology