

# Suicide: Frequently Asked Questions



## Who Is At Risk For Suicide?

People of all genders, ages, and ethnicities can be at risk for suicide. The main risk factors for suicide are:

- A prior suicide attempt
- Depression and other mental health disorders
- Substance use disorder
- Family history of a mental health disorder, substance use disorder or suicide
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Guns or other firearms in the home
- Being exposed to others' suicidal behavior, such as a family member, peer, or media figure

Even among people who have risk factors for suicide, most do not attempt suicide. It remains difficult to predict who will act on suicidal thoughts.

## Are Certain Groups of People At Higher Risk Than Others?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), men are more likely to die by suicide than women, but women are more likely to attempt suicide. Certain demographic subgroups are at higher risk. For example, American Indian and Alaska Native youth and middle-aged persons have the highest rate of suicide. While younger preteens and teens have a lower rate of suicide than older adolescents, there has been a significant rise in the suicide rate among youth ages 10 to 14. Suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death for this age group.

- All talk of suicide should be taken seriously and requires attention.
- Asking people about suicidal thoughts and behaviors does not induce or increase such thoughts and experiences.
- Men are more likely to die by suicide than women, but women are more likely to attempt suicide.
- Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among youth ages 10-14 and 15-24.

## Why Do Some People Become Suicidal While Others With Similar Risk Factors Do Not?

Most people who have the risk factors for suicide will not kill themselves. However, the risk for suicidal behavior is complex. Research suggests that people who attempt suicide may react to events, think, and make decisions differently than those who do not attempt suicide. These differences happen more often if a person also has a disorder such as depression, substance abuse, anxiety, borderline personality disorder, and psychosis. Risk factors are important to keep in mind; however, someone who has warning signs of suicide may be in more danger and require immediate attention.



Wheeler

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**800.232.4424 (phone)**  
**[www.ctclearinghouse.org](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org)**

**A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness**

## What Are Some Warning Signs Of Suicide?

The behaviors below may be signs that someone is thinking about suicide:

- Talking about wanting to die or wanting to kill themselves
- Talking about feeling empty, hopeless, or having no reason to live  
Planning or looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online, stockpiling pills, or newly acquiring potentially lethal items
- Talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions  
Using alcohol or drugs more often
- Acting anxious or agitated
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Changing eating and/or sleeping habits
- Taking risks that could lead to death, such as reckless driving  
Displaying extreme mood swings, suddenly changing from very sad to very calm or happy
- Giving away important possessions and putting affairs in order

## Do People Threaten Suicide To Get Attention?

Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress and an alert that someone needs help. Any warning sign or symptom of suicide should not be ignored. All talk of suicide should be taken seriously and requires attention. Threatening to die by suicide is not a normal response to stress and should not be taken lightly.

## If You Ask Someone About Suicide, Does It Put The Idea Into Their Head?

Asking someone about suicide is not harmful. There is a common myth that asking someone about suicide can put the idea into their head. This is not true. Studies have demonstrated that asking people about suicidal thoughts and behavior does not induce or increase such thoughts and experiences. In fact, asking someone directly, "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" can be the best way to identify someone at risk for suicide.

## What Should I Do If I Am In A Crisis Or Someone I Know Is Considering Suicide?

If you or someone you know has warning signs or symptoms of suicide, particularly if there is a change in the behavior or a new behavior, get help as soon as possible. If someone is telling you that they are going to kill themselves, do not leave them alone. Do not promise anyone that you will keep their suicidal thoughts a secret. Make sure to tell a trusted friend or family member, or if you are a student, an adult with whom you feel comfortable. You may also contact the resources included on this fact sheet.

## What If Someone Is Posting Suicidal Messages On Social Media?

Knowing how to get help for a friend posting suicidal messages on social media can save a life. Many social media sites have a process to report suicidal content and get help for the person posting the message. In addition, many of the social media sites use their analytic capabilities to identify and help report suicidal posts. Each offers different options on how to respond if you see concerning posts about suicide.

## Connecticut Resources

### IN IMMEDIATE DANGER CALL

9-1-1

### Statewide Suicide and Crisis Hotline

2-1-1

### CT Suicide Prevention

[www.preventsuicidect.org](http://www.preventsuicidect.org)

### Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

[www.ct.gov/dmhas](http://www.ct.gov/dmhas)

## National Resources

### 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

9-8-8

### Crisis Text Line

Text 741741

### American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)



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