

# NIMH ANSWERS QUESTIONS ABOUT SUICIDE



## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE?

Risk factors vary with age, gender, or ethnic group and may change over time. Some factors that increase an individual's risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors are:

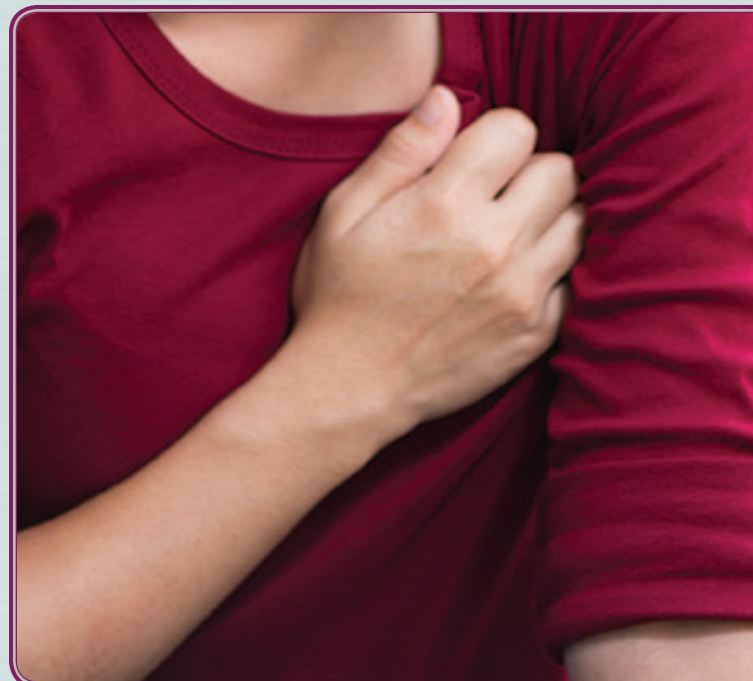
- ↳ Depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders
- ↳ Substance abuse disorder
- ↳ Chronic pain
- ↳ Prior suicide attempt
- ↳ Family history of suicide
- ↳ Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- ↳ Firearms in the home
- ↳ Having recently been released from jail or prison
- ↳ Exposure to suicidal behavior of others, such as family members or peers

**It is important to note that many people who have these risk factors are not suicidal.**



## HOW COMMON IS SUICIDE IN CHILDREN AND TEENS?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention **reported** that in 2014, suicide was the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10–24. Although these numbers may make suicide seem common, it is still a rare event. Suicidal thoughts or behaviors are more common than suicide deaths and are **signs of extreme distress. Suicidal thoughts and behaviors are not harmless bids for attention and should not be ignored.**





## WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

The following are some of the signs you might notice in yourself or a friend that may be reason for concern:

- Talking about wanting to die or wanting to kill oneself
- Making a plan or looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online
- Buying a gun, or stockpiling pills
- Feeling empty, hopeless, or feeling like there is no reason to live
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing from family or friends or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Saying good-bye to loved ones, putting affairs in order

**Seeking help is a sign of strength; if you are concerned, go with your instincts and seek professional help.**

**Reaching out to a friend you are concerned about is also a sign of strength.**



## WHAT CAN I DO FOR MYSELF OR SOMEONE ELSE?

Immediate action is very important. Here are a few resources:

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255), confidential help 24-hours-a-day. You can also visit the Lifeline's website at [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- **Veterans Crisis Line:** 1-800-273-8255, press 1
- **Crisis Text Line:** text CONNECT to 741-741
- **HealthReach**, information available in multiple languages: [www.healthreach.nlm.nih.gov/searchindex/Suicide](http://www.healthreach.nlm.nih.gov/searchindex/Suicide)
- **Help for Mental Illnesses:** National Institute of Mental Health web page [www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp)
- **Treatment Referral Routing Service:** 1-800-662-HELP (4357), funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration





## WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SUICIDE PREVENTION?

You can:

- Visit the NIMH website: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) and search “suicide”
- Visit the National Library of Medicine’s MedlinePlus,  
English: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus)  
En Español: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish)
- Find information on clinical trials at the National Library of Medicine Clinical Trials database: [www.ClinicalTrials.gov/](http://www.ClinicalTrials.gov/)
- Information from NIMH is available in multiple formats. You can browse and order items online, download documents in PDF, and order paper brochures through the mail.
- If you do not have Internet access and wish to receive information that supplements this publication, please contact the NIMH Information Resource Center at the numbers listed below.



## WHAT IF SOMEONE SEEMS SUICIDAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Many social media outlets, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, and Google+, have ways to report suicidal content and get help for the content creator. Each social media site has a different procedure, so search the site’s help page for assistance.



## WHAT IF I WANT TO WRITE A STORY ABOUT SUICIDE?

A: Great idea! Here are suggestions for reporting on suicide: <http://reportingonsuicide.org/>.



# REPRINTS

This publication is in the public domain and may be reproduced or copied without permission from NIMH. Citation of the National Institute of Mental Health as a source is appreciated. We encourage you to reproduce it and use it in your efforts to improve public health. However, using government materials inappropriately can raise legal or ethical concerns, so we ask you to use these guidelines:

- NIMH does not endorse or recommend any commercial products, processes, or services, and our publications may not be used for advertising or endorsement purposes.
- NIMH does not provide specific medical advice or treatment recommendations or referrals; our materials may not be used in a manner that has the appearance of such information.
- NIMH requests that non-Federal organizations not alter our publications in ways that will jeopardize the integrity and “brand” when using the publication.
- The addition of non-Federal Government logos and website links may not have the appearance of NIMH endorsement of any specific commercial products or services or medical treatments or services.
- Images used in publications are of models and are used for illustrative purposes only. Use of some images is restricted.

If you have questions regarding these guidelines and use of NIMH publications, please contact the NIMH Information Resource Center at 1-866-615-6464 or e-mail at [nimhinfo@nih.gov](mailto:nimhinfo@nih.gov).



National Institute  
of Mental Health

## National Institute of Mental Health

Office of Science Policy, Planning, and Communications  
Science Writing, Press, and Dissemination Branch

6001 Executive Boulevard

Room 6200, MSC 9663

Bethesda, MD 20892-9663

Phone: 301-443-4513 or

Toll-free: 1-866-615-NIMH (6464)

TTY: 301-443-8431 or TTY Toll-free: 1-866-415-8051

Fax: 301-443-4279

E-mail: [nimhinfo@nih.gov](mailto:nimhinfo@nih.gov)

Website: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

OM 16-4308

September 2016

