

Mental Health Information for Parents from FSUS

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

The rate of suicides and suicide attempts increases greatly during adolescence. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Over the counter or prescription drugs and use of firearms are common methods used in suicide attempts.

Boys vs. Girls

Suicide rates **differ** between boys and girls.

Girls think about & attempt suicide about **twice** as often as boys & tend to attempt suicide by overdosing on drugs or cutting themselves.

Yet, boys die by suicide about **four** times as often girls, perhaps because they tend to use more lethal methods, such as firearms, hanging, or jumping from heights.



Which teens are at risk?

Young people with mental health problems — such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, or insomnia — are at higher risk for suicidal thoughts. Teens going through major life changes (parents' divorce, moving, a parent leaving home due to military service or parental separation, financial changes) and those who are victims of bullying are at greater risk of suicidal thoughts.

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Factors that increase the risk of suicide include:

- Psychological disorders like depression, bipolar disorder, substance use
- Feelings of distress, irritability, or agitation
- Feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness
- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of depression or suicide
- Emotional, physical, or sexual abuse
- Lack of a support network or feelings of social isolation
- Dealing with bisexuality or homosexuality in an unsupportive family or community or hostile school environment

Warning Signs

- Talking about death
- Feeling hopeless or guilty
- Social isolation
- Writing about death
- Giving away possessions
- Loss of interest in school
- Loss of interest in favorite things
- Trouble concentrating
- Changes in eating or sleeping
- Increased risk-taking behaviors

What can parents do?

- Learn about resources below and pay attention to warning signs
- See warning signs as serious, do not dismiss them as “attention-seeking.”
If children are ignored when seeking attention, it may increase the chance of them harming themselves (or worse).

Resources

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/suicide.html>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/suicidal-behavior>

<https://afsp.org/campaigns/talk-about-mental-health-awareness/teens-and-suicide-what-parents-should-know/>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/ten-things-parents-can-do-to-prevent-suicide.aspx>

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/preventing-youth-suicide/preventing-youth-suicide-tips-for-parents-and-educators>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 988 (available 24/7)