



# Suicide prevention

**Are you having thoughts about hurting yourself or someone else?** Get help right away. If you're in a life-threatening situation, call 911. Getting help for mental health conditions can help prevent suicide.

## I'm having suicidal thoughts. What should I do?

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- Call 911. Suicidal thoughts are an emergency.
- Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
- Go to the emergency room.
- Tell someone who can help you find help right away.
- Stay away from things that might hurt you, like guns, medicines, or dangerous places.

You can also visit our section on [mental health conditions](#). For each condition, you'll find a list of resources to help you find the support you need. These feelings can and will go away. Talk to a health professional. You are not alone!

## What should I say if someone threatens to commit suicide?

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If you know someone who is at immediate risk of suicide, call 911 right away. Someone who wants to kill herself should see a doctor, nurse, or mental health professional right away.

If you know someone who might be suicidal, show that you care by:

- **Talking to the person.** Your willingness to talk about thoughts of suicide with a friend, family member, or co-worker can be the first step in getting her help and preventing suicide. You won't increase the risk of someone dying by suicide by talking to her about your concerns.
- **Sincerely listening to the person.** Do not offer advice or judgment, but let her know she is not alone. Don't worry about saying the exact, correct thing. Your presence in the person's life is what is most helpful.
- **Sharing your concerns.** If you feel that she may make a reckless decision, say that you are worried. The person needs to know that she is important to you and that you care.
- **Finding out if the person has a suicide plan.** If the person has a definite plan, don't leave her alone, and get help from other friends or family.
- **Offering help to find a professional counselor.** Many counselors or therapists can see a new patient in an emergency. A person's insurance plan, doctor, or nurse may be able to recommend someone right away.
- **Calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

It can be difficult when a loved one says she is thinking about suicide. All you can do is be supportive and let her know you care. You cannot control or change someone else's

behavior, no matter how much you love her. If a loved one commits suicide, it is not your fault.

## **What are the warning signs of suicide?**

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People who consider suicide often feel like there is no hope. They may often feel sad, lonely, trapped, or alone. Some people who have survived suicide attempts have said that these feelings go away and do not last forever.

The main warning signs of suicide include:

- Thinking or talking about suicide
- Misusing substances like drugs or alcohol
- Feeling no sense of purpose or belonging
- Anger
- Feeling trapped (feeling like there is no way out)
- Hopelessness (feeling there is nothing to live for)
- Withdrawal (from family, friends, work, school, activities, or hobbies)
- Anxiety (restlessness, irritability, or agitation)
- Recklessness (high risk-taking behavior)
- Severe mood swings or highs and lows

Other warning signs of suicide include:

- Looking for ways to die (e.g., internet searches for how to commit suicide; looking for guns or pills)
- Talking about hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness
- Thinking about death a lot
- Suddenly acting happier or calmer after showing other suicide warning signs
- Loss of interest in things they used to care about (e.g., hobbies, relationships, work, school)
- Visiting or calling loved ones and saying goodbye, especially after a long absence
- Making arrangements or putting their affairs in order
- Giving things away, such as prized possessions

A suicidal person needs to see a doctor or mental health professional right away.

## **What puts someone at risk of suicide?**

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Some things that increase a woman's risk of suicide include:

- Depression and other mental health conditions or a substance use disorder. More than 9 in 10 people who die by suicide have a mental health condition or substance abuse problem.<sup>1</sup>
- A prior suicide attempt
- A family history of mental disorders or substance abuse
- A family history of suicide
- Recent divorce or loss of a spouse or partner<sup>2</sup>
- Eating disorders<sup>3</sup>
- Sexual orientation. Research suggests that lesbians and bisexual women are at higher risk of suicide than heterosexual women are.<sup>4</sup>

- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Firearms in the home
- Exposure to suicide by other people, including family members, friends, co-workers, or media figures
- Lack of social connection<sup>5</sup>

### Did we answer your question about suicide prevention?

For more information about suicide prevention, call the OWH Helpline at 1-800-994-9662 or check out the following resources from other organizations:

- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: After an Attempt — A Guide for Taking Care of Your Family Member After Treatment in the Emergency Department](#) (PDF, 352 KB) — Brochure from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- [Older Adults and Depression](#) — Information from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).
- [Suicide](#) — Fact sheet from NIMH.
- [Suicide Myths](#)  — Information from Suicide.org.
- [Suicide Prevention](#) — Information from SAMHSA.

### Sources

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. (2008). [Substance Abuse and Suicide Prevention: Evidence & Implications—A White Paper](#). DHHS Pub. No. SMA-08-4352. Rockville, MD: SAMHSA.
2. Vörös, V., Osváth, P., Fekete, S. (2004). [\[Gender differences in suicidal behavior\]](#). *Neuropsychopharmacologia Hungarica*; 6(2): 65–71.
3. Pisetsky, E.M., Thornton, L.M., Lichtenstein, P., Pedersen, N.L., Bulik, C.M. (2013). [Suicide attempts in women with eating disorders](#). *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*; 122(4): 1042–1056.
4. Cochran, S.D., Mays, V.M. (2015). [Mortality Risks Among Persons Reporting Same-Sex Sexual Partners: Evidence From the 2008 General Social Survey-National Death Index Data Set](#). *American Journal of Public Health*; 105(2): 358–364.
5. Tsai, A.C., Lucas, M., Kawachi, I. (2015). [Association between social integration and suicide among women in the United States](#). *JAMA Psychiatry*; 72(10): 987–993.