

How to Know if a Teenager Is at Risk for Suicide

There are signs that a teenager is thinking about suicide - and actions you can take to prevent it.

1. **Notice if your teenager talks about suicide** or makes statements that indicate suicidal thoughts. For example: "I wish I were dead," "I hate myself," "The world would be better without me".
2. **Ask your teenager directly**, "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" If the answer is yes, ask, "What are you thinking about doing?"
3. **In a calm, caring manner, question your teenager** about his or her suicide plan: when, where, and how he or she is thinking about doing it and whether there are actual, available means to do it - meaning access to pills, a gun, a rope, etc.
4. **Listen carefully** to how carefully calculated the plan is. The more specific the plan, the more serious the thoughts of suicide.
5. **Show empathy and understanding** rather than sounding panicky, angry, irritated or upset. Allow your teen to express thoughts and feelings openly.
6. **Stay with your teen** until you determine the immediate danger of a suicide attempt has passed. Call your doctor and tell him or her you think your child may be suicidal and you need help right away.
7. **Take immediate action to protect your teen** if the plan is carefully calculated and you think the danger of suicide is immediate. **Call 911 or take your teen to the emergency rooms:**
 - Directly asking an adolescent if he or she is thinking about suicide does not create suicidal thoughts or "put the idea in his or her head". Asking about suicidal feels allows the two of you to talk openly about thoughts and feelings, which can be very helpful.
 - If you are not with the teenager, but know where he or she is, you can still call 911. They know what to do and will take the teen to the hospital if necessary