

Teen suicides by hanging on the rise across U.S.

March 5 2015



CDC urges doctors, others to look for warning signs.

(HealthDay)—Doctors and parents should be aware of the increased use of hanging as a means of teen suicide and take preventive measures, U.S. health officials say.

Among 10- to 24-year-olds, [suicide rates](#) by hanging increased, on average, 6.7 percent for females and 2.2 percent for males between 1994 and 2012, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in the March 6 issue of the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

"Those who work with young people should be aware of trends in suffocation [hanging] suicides so they can accurately assess risk and educate families about the importance of reducing access to highly lethal

methods where possible, not leaving those at risk alone, and seeking help," the CDC said in a news release.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10- to 24-year-olds in the United States. Guns, hanging (and other means of suffocation) and poisoning are the three leading methods, according to Erin Sullivan, of the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, and colleagues.

"Early prevention of suicidal thoughts and behavior is critical," agency officials warned. Of utmost importance is reducing the stigma associated with seeking help for [mental health issues](#), the report said.

"We all have a role to play in providing support and reducing stigma associated with seeking help," the agency said in the news release.

Because copycat behavior is common among vulnerable teens, the CDC said the media inadvertently contributes to "suicide contagion." At least 50 studies worldwide have shown that prominent or sensational coverage of suicides increases the odds that people already at risk will take their own lives, the news release explained.

"Risk of additional suicides increases when the story explicitly describes the suicide method, uses dramatic/graphic headlines or images, and repeated/extensive coverage sensationalizes or glamorizes a death," according to established guidelines for reporting on suicide.

The CDC also said that [social networking sites](#) often become memorials to the deceased and should be monitored for statements that others are considering suicide.

Talking about wanting to take your life is one warning sign of potential suicide, experts say. Some other signs are:

- thinking about ways of killing yourself,
- talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose,
- talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain, or being a burden to others,
- using alcohol or drugs more frequently,
- acting anxious, agitated or recklessly,
- sleeping too little or too much; withdrawing or feeling isolated,
- displaying rage or showing [extreme mood swings](#).

The more of these signs someone shows, the greater the risk, experts warn.

Anyone concerned about a friend or family member can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255). This helpline operates 24 hours a day.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health has more about [teen depression](#).

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