

Spotting the signs of suicide risk

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Recognizing the signs that someone is considering [suicide](#) could help save a life.

"Emergency physicians see many people who are struggling silently with their [mental health](#)," said Dr. Gillian Schmitz, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians.

"One of the most impactful things anyone can do to prevent a tragedy is to spot signs of trouble and simply start a conversation," she said in a college news release. "Talking about mental health is an important first step that could make all the difference for somebody who needs help."

Every 11 minutes, one person died by suicide in 2020 in the United States, [according](#) to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

There are certain factors that can make it more likely someone could consider suicide. Some factors can increase risk, including certain mood or [personality disorders](#), alcohol or [substance use disorders](#), feelings of hopelessness, aggressive or impulsive behaviors, a history of trauma and major illness.

Others include previous suicide attempts or family history of suicide, job loss, a lack of social support or lack of access to [health care](#) or behavioral health services, according to the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Warning signs include talking about wanting to die, feeling hopeless, or being a burden. Someone considering suicide may increase their use of alcohol or drugs, engage in reckless or risky behaviors, have trouble sleeping or sleep all the time.

Suddenly withdrawing or isolating from family or friends is warning sign, as is displaying extreme mood swings, rage, or revenge-seeking behaviors and experiencing unusual amounts of anxiety or agitation.

"One of the most effective ways to prevent [suicide](#) is to prioritize and address mental health before it becomes an emergency," Schmitz said. "But you can be assured that an emergency physician will be ready to help if a crisis occurs."

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department if you believe there is an immediate health or safety risk to you or someone else.

Anyone in suicidal crisis or experiencing mental health-related distress can get help through the new [988 hotline](#), formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This network of more than 200 locally operated and funded crisis centers around the country provides free and confidential support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [suicide risk](#).

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