

Consumer health: Teens and suicide

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Suicidal thoughts are common among teens and young adults, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Nearly 20% of high school students in the U.S. report serious thoughts of suicide, and 9% report a suicide attempt. And while suicide affects people of all ages, in 2021 it was the second-leading cause of death for people 10-14 and 20-34,

according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Suicide is a tragic reaction to stressful life situations. Most often, [suicidal thoughts](#) are the result of feeling helpless or unable to cope with what seems like an overwhelming life situation. Without hope for the future, suicide may seem like the only solution. There also may be a genetic link to suicide, as people who die by suicide, or have suicidal thoughts or behavior, are more likely to have a family history of suicide.

Teen depression is a serious mental health problem, and untreated depression can result in emotional, behavioral and [health problems](#) that affect every area of your teenager's life. Complications can include alcohol and drug misuse, academic problems, family conflicts and relationship difficulties, and suicide or [suicide attempts](#).

Warning signs that someone is thinking of suicide aren't always obvious, and they can vary from person to person. Some people make their intentions clear, while others keep suicidal thoughts and feelings secret.

When people say they are thinking about suicide or act as though they may be considering harming themselves, it can be upsetting. You may not be sure what to do to help. You may wonder whether you should take them seriously or if you might make the situation worse.

Taking action is always the best choice. While you're not responsible for preventing someone from taking his or her own life, your intervention may help your teen see that other options are available to stay safe and get treatment.

If you think your teen or someone you know may hurt themselves or attempt suicide, get help right away by taking one of these actions:

- Call your mental health specialist.

- Call a crisis hotline number. In the U.S., call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline 24/7. Or use Lifeline Chat. Services are free and confidential. U.S. veterans or service members who are in crisis can call 988 and press "1" for the Veterans Crisis Line, text 838255 or chat online. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S. also has a Spanish-language phone line at 888-628-9454.
- Call 911 or your local emergency number.
- Seek help from your health care professional.
- Reach out to a close friend or loved one.
- Contact a minister, spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.

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