

## TEEN SUICIDE RISK FACTORS & PREVENTION

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Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teens. Yet, it can be challenging for parents to recognize the signs of a troubled teen considering teens usually excel at hiding problems, especially from adults. Teens who are depressed or using drugs are at the highest risk of taking their own life and a teen who is talking about suicide needs to be listened to carefully and taken seriously. It's important for parents to recognize that this is a time when receiving attention is exactly what's needed as the teen is trying to express how much pain they are in.

### What Are Teen Suicide Risk Factors?

Risk factors are habits or histories that put someone at greater likelihood of having a problem. Some of the risk factors for suicide may be inherited, such as a family history of suicide. Others, like physical illness, may also be out of your control. But, if you can recognize the risk factors for suicide early and act to change the ones you can control, you may save a life.

*It's important to take these risk factors for suicide very seriously:*

- Statements like "I just want to go to sleep and never wake up," or "Everyone would be better off if I were dead."
- Depression or sadness lasting for more than two weeks.
- Feelings of hopelessness.
- Sudden and drastic changes in personality.
- Behavior such as sleeping, eating or grooming in excess.
- Giving away personal belongings that have special meanings.
- Saying a final goodbye to family and friends or leaving a goodbye note.
- Previous suicide attempt(s).
- Substance abuse and/or alcohol disorders.
- History of abuse or mistreatment.
- Family history of suicide.
- Physical illness.
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies.
- Social, relationship or financial loss.
- Isolation or lack of social support.
- Easy access to methods/means of suicide.
- Exposure to others who have committed suicide.

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### **Recognizing Depression Can Prevent Suicide**

If you want to prevent suicide, it's important to understand depression. Depression is often used to describe general feelings of helplessness, worthlessness and hopelessness. When teens feel sad or low, they often say they are depressed. While most of us feel sad or low sometimes, feelings of depression are longer lasting and often more serious.

*Depression is diagnosed when someone has at least five of the following symptoms:*

- Feeling down, depressed or sad most of the day; or feeling irritable and angry.
- Loss of interest in daily activities.
- Significant weight loss or weight gain; a decrease or increase in appetite.
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much.
- Feeling very nervous and hyper; or feeling sluggish.
- Fatigue or no energy.
- Feeling worthless or unnecessarily guilty.
- Difficulty concentrating and/or indecisiveness.
- Either recurrent thoughts of death without a specific plan or a suicide attempt, or a specific plan for committing suicide.

**Teens:** If you have five or more of these symptoms, talk to your parents. They can make you an appointment with a counselor/therapist for a diagnosis and proper treatment.

**Parents:** If you recognize five more of these symptoms in your child, seek assistance from a mental health professional.

### **Help For Teens Considering Suicide**

There are many resources available to teens who are thinking about suicide. Close friends, family members, teachers and other members of the community can provide comfort and moral support. If you're feeling suicidal or know someone who is, don't be afraid to approach these people to express your feelings. They can help save your life -- or the life of your friend or family member. Religious groups and community organizations are also a valuable resource. In addition, there are many suicide hotlines that provide anonymous assistance such as the numbers listed below.

**Aurora East**  
6350 S. Maple Ave.  
Tempe, AZ 85283

**Aurora West**  
6015 W. Peoria Ave.  
Glendale, AZ 85302

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**24/7 Patient Services Helpline**  
**480.345.5420**  
**www.auroraarizona.com**

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**TeenLifeline.org**  
602.248.TEEN (8336)