

Suicide

- ⇒ Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US
- ⇒ The suicide rate for persons aged 15–19 was stable from 2000 to 2007, and then **increased 76% from 2007 (6.7) to 2017 (11.8)**. The pace of increase was greater from 2014 to 2017 (10% annually, on average) than from 2007 to 2014 (3% annually).
- ⇒ In 2018, 48,344 people died by suicide and an estimated 1.4 million attempts
- ⇒ Suicide costs the US over \$70 billion a year

Overview

- **Suicide** is defined as death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior.
- A **suicide attempt** is a non-fatal, self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior. A suicide attempt might not result in injury.
- **Suicidal ideation** refers to thinking about, considering, or planning suicide.

Signs and Symptoms

The behaviors listed below may be signs that someone is thinking about suicide:

- *Talking about wanting to die or wanting to kill themselves*
- *Talking about feeling empty, hopeless, or having no reason to live*
- *Making a plan or looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching for lethal methods online, stockpiling pills, or buying a gun*
- *Talking about great guilt or shame*
- *Talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions*
- *Feeling unbearable pain (emotional pain or physical pain)*
- *Talking about being a burden to others*
- *Using alcohol or drugs more often*
- *Acting anxious or agitated*
- *Withdrawing from family and friends*
- *Changing eating and/or sleeping habits*
- *Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge*
- *Taking great risks that could lead to death, such as driving extremely fast*
- *Talking or thinking about death often*
- *Displaying extreme mood swings, suddenly changing from very sad to very calm or happy*
- *Giving away important possessions*
- *Saying goodbye to friends and family*

Specific to Teens

What makes teens vulnerable to suicide?

Many teens who attempt or die by suicide have a mental health condition. As a result, they have trouble coping with the stress of being a teen, such as dealing with rejection, failure, breakups and family turmoil. They might also be unable to see that they can turn their lives around — and that suicide is a permanent response, not a solution, to a temporary problem.

What are the risk factors for teen suicide?

A teen might feel suicidal due to certain life circumstances such as:

- *Having a psychiatric disorder, including depression*
- *Loss of or conflict with close friends or family members*
- *History of physical or sexual abuse or exposure to violence*
- *Problems with alcohol or drugs*
- *Physical or medical issues, for example, becoming pregnant or having a sexually transmitted infection*
- *Being the victim of bullying*
- *Struggling with sexual orientation*
- *Exposure to the suicide of a family member or friend*
- *Being adopted*
- *Family history of mood disorder or suicidal behavior*

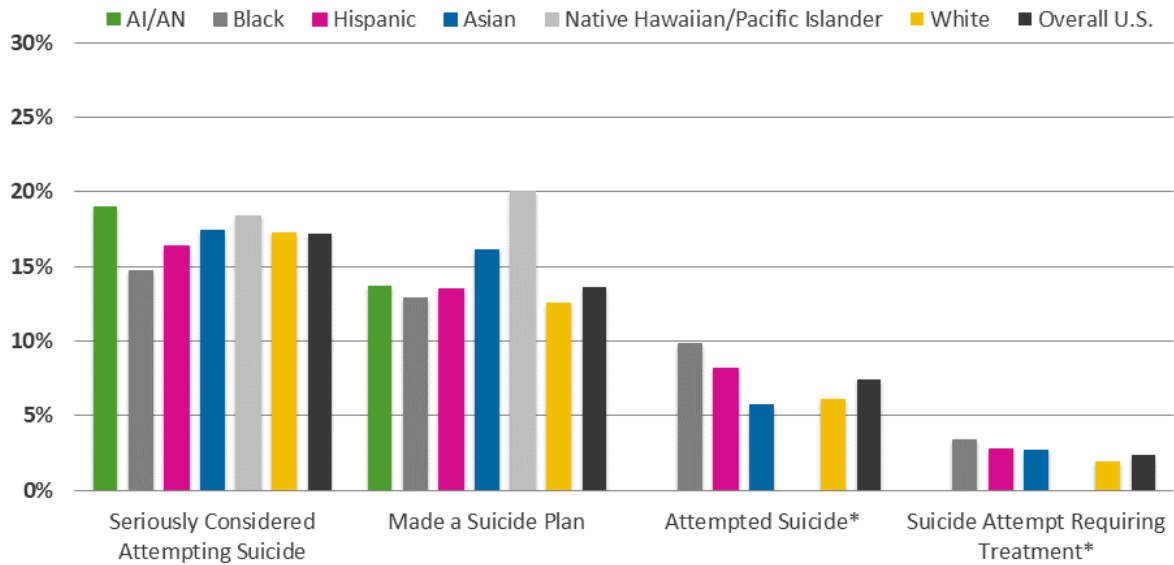
What are the warning signs that a teen might be suicidal?

- *Talking or writing about suicide — for example, making statements such as "I'm going to kill myself," or "I won't be a problem for you much longer"*
- *Withdrawing from social contact (isolation)*
- *Having mood swings*
- *Increasing use of alcohol or drugs*
- *Feeling trapped or hopeless about a situation*
- *Changing normal routine, including eating or sleeping patterns*
- *Doing risky or self-destructive things*
- *Giving away belongings when there is no other logical explanation for why this is being done*
- *Developing personality changes or being severely anxious or agitated when experiencing some of the warning signs listed above*

Statistics across Ethnicities among teens:

SPRC | Suicide Prevention Resource Center

Past-Year Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors for High School Youth, United States 2017



*Percentage estimates for AI/AN youth and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander youth who had a past-year suicide attempt or whose suicide attempt resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse were too small to be reliable and are not included in this chart.

www.sprc.org

Source: CDC, 2017

Suicidal thoughts and behaviors vary by race and ethnicity among youth. AI/AN, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander high school youth have the highest percentages of past-year serious thoughts of suicide and past-year suicide plans when compared to other races and ethnicities. Among those races and ethnicities where estimates can be reliably obtained, Black high school youth appear to have a slightly higher percentage of past-year suicide attempts and past-year attempts requiring medical treatment.

How Do I Get Help?

When life doesn't seem worth living anymore, it may seem that the only way to find relief is through suicide. When you're feeling this way, it may be hard to believe, but you do have other options.

Take a step back and separate your emotions from your actions for the moment.

- Recognize that depression and hopelessness can distort your perceptions and reduce your ability to make good decisions.
- Realize that suicidal feelings are the result of treatable problems.
- Act as if there are other options instead of suicide, even if you may not see them right now.

It may not be easy, and you might not feel better overnight. Eventually, though, the sense of hopelessness — and thoughts of suicide — will lift.

Get immediate help

If you think you may hurt yourself or attempt suicide, get help right away by taking one of these actions:

You can call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, the toll-free number for the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline \(NSPL\)](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org), which is available 24 hours a day, every day. The service is available to everyone. All calls are free and confidential. You can also chat with the NSPL online (<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>).

The [Crisis Text Line](https://www.crisistextline.org) is another free, confidential resource available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. **Text "HOME" to 741741** and a trained crisis counselor will respond to you with support and information via text message.

Visit <https://www.crisistextline.org>.

- Call your mental health specialist.
- Call 911 or your local emergency number.
- Seek help from your doctor or other health care provider.
- Reach out to a close friend or loved one.
- Contact a minister, spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.

What should I do if I suspect my teen is suicidal?

If you think your teen is in immediate danger, call 911, your local emergency number or a suicide hotline number — such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)** in the United States.

If you suspect that your teen might be thinking about suicide, talk to him or her immediately. Don't be afraid to use the word "suicide." Talking about suicide won't plant ideas in your teen's head.

Ask your teen to talk about his or her feelings and listen. Don't dismiss his or her problems. Instead, reassure your teen of your love. Remind your teen that he or she can work through whatever is going on — and that you're willing to help.

Also, seek medical help for your teen. Teens who are feeling suicidal usually need to see a psychiatrist or psychologist experienced in diagnosing and treating adolescents with mental health struggles.

What can I do to help prevent teen suicide?

- **Address depression or anxiety.** Don't wait for your teen to come to you. If your teen is sad, anxious or appears to be struggling — ask what's wrong and offer your help.
- **Pay attention.** If your teen is thinking about suicide, he or she is likely displaying warning signs. Listen to what he or she is saying and how they are acting. Never shrug off threats of suicide as teen melodrama.
- **Discourage isolation.** Encourage your teen to spend time with supportive friends and family.
- **Encourage a healthy lifestyle.** Help your teen eat well, exercise and get regular sleep.
- **Support the treatment plan.** If your teen is undergoing treatment for suicidal behavior, remind him or her that it might take time to feel better. Help your teen follow his or her doctor's recommendations. Also, encourage your teen to participate in activities that will help him or her rebuild confidence.
- **Safely store firearms, alcohol and medications.** Access to means can play a role if a teen is already suicidal.

What if Someone I Know Is Considering Suicide?

- If someone is telling you that he or she is going to kill himself or herself, do not leave him or her alone.
- Do not promise anyone that you will keep his or her suicidal thoughts a secret. Make sure to tell a trusted friend or family member, or an adult with whom you feel comfortable.
- Get help as soon as possible. Call 911 for emergency services and/or take the person to the nearest hospital emergency room.

5 Action Steps for Helping Someone in Emotional Pain

 ASK "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"	 KEEP THEM SAFE Reduce access to lethal items or places.	 BE THERE Listen carefully and acknowledge their feelings.	 HELP THEM CONNECT Save the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number 1-800-273-8255.	 STAY CONNECTED Follow up and stay in touch after a crisis.
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For more information on suicide prevention: www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention 

What if someone is posting suicidal messages or something disturbing on social media?

If you see messages or live streaming suicidal behavior on social media, call 911 immediately, contact the toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text the Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741).

Some social media sites also have a process to report suicidal content and get help for the person posting the message. Each offers different options on how to respond if you see concerning posts about suicide. For example:

- Instagram uses automated tools in the app to provide resources, which can also be found online at <https://help.instagram.com> [use the search term, "suicide," self-injury," or "suicide prevention"].
- Snapchat's Support provides guidance at <https://support.snapchat.com> (use the search term, "suicide" or "suicide prevention").
- Twitter's Best Practices in Dealing With Self-Harm and Suicide at <https://support.twitter.com> (use the search term "suicide," "self-harm," or "suicide prevention")
- YouTube's Safety Center webpage can be found at <https://support.google.com/youtube> (use the search term "suicide and self-injury").
- Facebook Suicide Prevention webpage can be found at www.facebook.com/help/594991777257121/ (use the search term "suicide" or "suicide prevention").

Because help via these processes may be delayed, it is still important to call 911 if someone is posting suicidal messages or something disturbing on social media. People—even strangers—have saved lives by taking action.

Need help getting connected to a professional? Email counseling@breakdownstl.org for assistance.

Sources:

- * American Foundation for Suicide Prevention - <https://afsp.org>
- * National Institute of Mental Health - <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>
- * Mayo Clinic - <https://www.mayoclinic.org>
- * Centers for Disease and Control Prevention - <https://www.cdc.gov>
- * Suicide Prevention Resource Center - <https://www.sprc.org>