

- Living under chronically stressful social conditions, such as extreme poverty or homelessness.
- Prior suicide attempts.
- A history of mental disorders, including bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, or substance abuse.
- A family history of suicide.
- Access to lethal means, such as guns or medications.

Youth in many Aboriginal communities where rates of suicide are much higher than the general population are at an increased risk. The reasons for this are complex and longstanding.

WARNING SIGNS

Since risk of suicide is strongly related to depression, they share a number of warning signs

- Talking about feelings of hopelessness or no future;
- Talking about feelings of helplessness, or being trapped with no way out;
- Talking about feelings of being a burden to others;
- Having trouble concentrating and issues at school or work;
- Frequent complaints of physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches;
- Eating or sleeping much more or much less than usual;
- Withdrawing from usual activities and relationships with friends and family;
- Engaging in risky, reckless or self-destructive behaviors like drug use or cutting;
- Acting anxious or angry, experiencing extreme mood swings;
- Talking about 'going away,' giving away possessions to others;
- Talking about death, suicide or wanting to die;
- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself; and
- Actively researching ways to die.

There may or may not be warning signs that a person is going to attempt suicide. But if there are any signals, you need to take them seriously.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Know the signs and signals.
- If you have concerns, ask if they are thinking about suicide. It's a myth that talking about suicide will 'give someone ideas.' It won't. If anything, it will show them they are not alone, that you care, and you want to know how to help.
- Always listen carefully. Take concerns seriously and let them do most of the talking.
- Do not pass judgment.
- Avoid simplistic advice like 'cheer up.' Instead, let them know they're important and you want them to live.
- Let them know you are there for them. They are most likely feeling alone, alienated and unwanted.
- Ask how you can help. Trust is very important so only promise things you can actually do, but make sure they know you will help them get help.
- You can't do it all, but you can help them get the help they need.
- Call a crisis line.

Kids Help Phone

1-800-668-6868

<http://www.kidshelpphone.ca>

Free, anonymous and confidential professional phone counselling and online counselling, available 24/7 for kids and youth 20 years of age and younger.

Information gathered from <https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/understanding-suicide-and-finding-help/>
