

Teen Suicide - Spotting the Warning Signs

Did you know that suicide is the third leading cause of death among preteens, teens and young adults? According to a study by the Centers for Disease control, suicide rates among teens shot up 8% in 2003/04 — the largest increase in 15 years. Suicide rates among girls rose at alarming rates, with a 76% increase among girls ages 10 - 14 and a 32% increase among girls ages 15 - 19. Since 2004, prescribed antidepressant usage among teens has decreased due to concerns about the possibility of increased suicidal thoughts among teens taking these medications. Current thinking is that this decrease in medication use may actually be contributing to the spike in teen suicides, as teens may not be getting the help they need. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, most teens who kill themselves (more than 90%) show some signs of a mental health problem like depression before they take their life. If your teen shows any of the following “red flags” for risk of suicide, please call our nurse advice line immediately so that we may schedule an appointment with one of our providers or recommend a consultation with a mental health specialist:

- Talking about suicide, death or “going away”.
- Giving away possessions they “will no longer be needing”.
- Unrealistic plans/goals or feeling trapped, hopeless or without purpose.
- Losing interest in family/friends/activities.
- Having difficulty concentrating.
- Experiencing dramatic changes in mood, eating or sleeping habits.
- Engaging in reckless/self-destructive behavior (cutting, drug/alcohol abuse).
- Feeling especially agitated, anxious, panicked, impulsive, angry, or aggressive.
- Appearing increasingly restless or excited (often with fast, driven speech).