



Hope. Heal. Recover.

WARNING SIGNS OF MENTAL ILLNESS IN CHILDREN AND TEENS

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness **suicide is the third leading cause of death in children and teens**. Furthermore, **50%** of all lifetime cases of mental illness **begin by age 14 years** and **75% by age 24 years**. Getting your child help early on can help prevent your child from being one of the **37% of students** with mental health conditions who **drop out of school**.

11 Warning Signs:

1. Feeling very sad or withdrawn for two or more weeks
2. Seriously trying to harm or kill himself, or making plans to do so
3. Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing
4. Involved in multiple fights, using a weapon, or wanting badly to hurt others
5. Severe, out-of-control behavior that can hurt himself or others
6. Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to make herself lose weight
7. Intensive worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
8. Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still that puts her in physical danger or causes school failure
9. Repeated use of drugs or alcohol
10. Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
11. Drastic changes in her behavior or personality



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WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU EXPECT YOUR CHILD HAS A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?

5 INITIAL STEPS TO HELPING YOUR CHILD

- 1. Start a conversation.** Approximately 80% of parents are unaware of their child's mental health concerns. If you notice a change in behavior, talk to your child to find out more. Make sure you use statements that are not blaming. Try using: "I've noticed you're [eating less, sleeping more, not coming to school, crying a lot], is everything okay?" and "I've noticed that you haven't been acting like yourself lately. Is something going on?"
- 2. Offer support.** Explain to your child that sometimes we need help dealing with the stress of life and offer to be there to talk, hang out, or set up an appointment with a doctor or mental health professional. Examples of supportive statements include: "Do you want me to come with you to see a counselor/doctor?"; "It worries me to hear you talking this way. Let's talk to someone who can help you"; "I really want to help, what can I do to help you right now?"
- 3. Monitor behaviors/symptoms.** Monitor changes in behavior and symptoms to identify any patterns. Look for isolation, avoiding others, changes in eating/sleeping, lack of hygiene care, and any self-harm.
- 4. Keep the environment safe.** The most common method of suicide is firearms, suffocation, and poisoning. Keep firearms out of the home or securely locked. Ensure all medications, even over the counter medications, are locked or placed in an area that is difficult to access. Keep other weapons and sharp objects put away and out of site including kitchen knives, scissors, and shaving razors.
- 5. Get help.** Set up an appointment for your child to see a medical doctor or a mental health professional to determine if mental health treatment is necessary.

WHEN IS IT A **CRISIS** SITUATION?

Thoughts of wanting to die
Plan to kill self
Intent to follow through with plan

OTHER FACTORS:

- **Saying goodbyes, giving things away, googling ways to die**
- **Safety Risk – not able to keep self and others safe**
- **History of suicidal thoughts or trying to kill self**
- **Threats to seriously hurt self/others**
- **Mental status – hearing/seeing things that aren't there, delusions, erratic behaviors**

Call 9-1-1, bring child to the emergency room, or call the local crisis line at 1-218-749-2881.