



## When a family member is suicidal

## What should I do if I think my family member is considering suicide?

- Talk to your family member about how they are feeling. Asking about suicide won't cause or increase suicidal thoughts, or cause the person to act on them. It may help them feel less isolated and scared. It may also allow you to see how you can help.
- Let the person know you are there to listen and encourage them to speak to their health care team, if they have one. If you are concerned that they are feeling more depressed or not acting like themselves, you can contact the team yourself if your family member has given them consent to speak to you.
- Encourage and help your loved one to stay away from alcohol and other drugs.
- Create a support network of family and friends who can accompany your family member to their health care appointments, or to other places they find stressful.
- Keep a copy of your loved one's "safety plan" (if there is one, and they are willing to share it), so you know what steps to take if they are feeling more suicidal.
- Keep crisis line numbers handy (program them into your family member's phone, and your own). See the last section of this pamphlet for numbers to call.
- Obtain a Form 2 from a justice of the peace if you are concerned that your family member is a risk to themselves or others. This form allows the police to take the person to hospital for assessment. At the hospital, a physician will assess the person to see if they should be put on a Form 1—if so, the person may be kept in hospital for up to 72 hours for emergency assessment.

## How can I make our home as safe as possible?

- Make sure guns or other weapons are not accessible at home.
- Keep alcohol and other drugs out of the home.
- Store medications safely. Work with your loved one and their care team (including their pharmacist) to make sure they do not have access to large quantities of medications.
- Lock up pesticides and other dangerous household chemicals.
- Remove access to sharp objects (such as knives and razor blades) if possible.

## What are warning signs for suicide?

Key warning signs include:

- making a suicide attempt
- preparing for a suicide attempt—for example, collecting medications, trying to get access to a gun, researching ways to end their life, or trying to buy tools to use in suicide
- talking about suicide—saying things like, “I’m going to kill myself” or “People will be better off without me”
- writing suicide notes, saying goodbye, giving away belongings, or getting their affairs in order
- showing big changes in their personality, routines, thinking or energy level—for example, not sleeping, excessive pacing, hearing voices or experiencing paranoia
- taking part in risky, violent or self-destructive behaviour.

The American Association of Suicidology has developed a simple tool to help you remember warning signs for suicide. The tool is called “**IS PATH WARM.**”



## What if my family member shows warning signs for suicide?

- Take your family member to the nearest hospital emergency department, if you can do so safely.
- If the person will not go to the hospital or you are unsure if this is the right thing to do, get help from a health care provider as quickly as possible. You can call your family member’s health care team, if someone is available, or a crisis line (see next section).
- If your loved one is attempting or about to attempt suicide, and you are not at risk, do not leave them alone and call 911.

- Keep yourself safe. If your family member is agitated, threatening or aggressive, call 911 while making sure you and others are safe.
- Do not challenge or argue with your loved one—try to stay supportive and calm.

## Who can I contact for support or information?

- Crisis lines (in Toronto):  
**Gerstein Centre: 416 929-5200**  
**Toronto Distress Centre: 416 408-HELP (4357)**
- Your family member's primary care provider or mental health clinician—if the person has given them consent to speak to you.
- Your own primary care provider—make an appointment to talk about how you've been feeling and to get support.
- **Family Association for Mental Health Everywhere (FAME)**  
[www.fameforfamilies.com](http://www.fameforfamilies.com)  
 416 207-5032
- **Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention**  
<http://suicideprevention.ca>
- Mental health first aid course offered through the **Mental Health Commission of Canada**  
[www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca)
- Suicide intervention training offered by **Living Works Education**  
[www.livingworks.net](http://www.livingworks.net)

For more information on addiction and mental health issues, or to download a copy of this resource, please visit our website:  
[www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)

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If you have questions, concerns or compliments about services at CAMH, please call the Client Relations Office at:  
 Tel.: 416 535-8501 ext. 32028  
 E-mail: [client.relations@camh.ca](mailto:client.relations@camh.ca)

Family members are welcome to contact the Office of Family Engagement for information and help getting connected:  
 100 Stokes St. (Bell Gateway Bldg.), ground floor, room 1314  
 Tel.: 416 535-8501 ext. 33202  
 E-mail: [familyengagement@camh.ca](mailto:familyengagement@camh.ca)

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