



# Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September is Suicide Awareness Month - a time to highlight a topic that's often stigmatized and hard to discuss. This month is about shifting public perception, spreading hope and sharing vital resources with those who may be struggling. Suicidal thoughts and behaviors are more common than suicide deaths and signal deep emotional distress. These signs should never be dismissed as attention-seeking - they deserve compassion, support and timely care.

## Risk Factors

Risk factors can vary based on age, gender, ethnicity and can also shift over time. While certain factors may increase a person's risk for suicidal thoughts or behaviors, it's important to remember that having these risk factors does not mean someone is suicidal. Many people who experience these challenges do not go on to attempt suicide.

These risk factors include, but are not limited to, mental health conditions like depression, anxiety or substance use disorders, as well as chronic pain or a history of suicide attempts. Risk may also rise with a family history of suicide, experiences of family violence or access to firearms in the home. Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others can also have a significant impact.

## Warning Signs

Signs that someone may be struggling with suicidal thoughts include talking about wanting to die or making plans to end their life - such as searching online or gathering pills or weapons. They may express feelings of emptiness, hopelessness or being trapped in unbearable pain or say they feel like a burden to others. Other signs include increased use of alcohol or drugs, reckless behavior, changes in sleep, withdrawing from others, mood swings or expressions of anger or revenge. Saying goodbye to loved ones or putting affairs in order may also signal serious distress and the need for immediate support.

## What Can I Do for Myself or Someone Else?

Seeking help for yourself or a friend is a sign of strength. These resources can help you get started:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: call/text 988
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Hotline: Call 1-800-950-6264 or Text HOME to 741-741
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): call 1-800-662-4357

**BHS provides referrals to qualified mental health professionals that can help. To speak to your designated Care Coordinator about your benefits and options for support call BHS at 800-245-1150.**