

# Tip sheet

## Suicide prevention

Suicide is a serious public health problem that affects people of all ages. It is often the result of multiple risk factors. Having these risk factors, however, does not mean that suicide will occur.



### Risk factors

- History of previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- History of depression or other mental illness
- History of alcohol or drug abuse
- Stressful life event or loss
- Easy access to lethal methods
- History of interpersonal violence
- Stigma associated with mental illness and help-seeking.

Many people are uncomfortable with the topic of suicide. Too often, victims are blamed and their families and friends are left stigmatised. As a result, people are reluctant to communicate openly about suicidal thoughts. This secrecy reduces effective prevention.

### Warning signs of acute risk

- Threatening or talking of wanting to hurt or end their life
- Looking for ways to kill themselves by trying to access firearms, available pills or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary.

### Expanded warning signs

- Increased substance use
- Talking about having no reason for living; no sense of purpose in life
- Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Feeling trapped, like there's no way out
- Hopelessness or feeling like they are a burden on others
- Withdrawal from friends, family and society
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Dramatic mood changes
- Giving meaningful items away.

If you think that someone might be at risk, pay attention to changes in their behaviour, trust your instincts and ask them directly if they are thinking about ending their life. If you need to talk to someone about support, please call Vitae.

### Contact

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