



INTRODUCTION

Research shows that suicide accounts for 9.5% of non-natural deaths in young people in South Africa. Anyone expressing suicidal thoughts should be taken seriously. A large number of suicides go unreported and many suicides are not recognised as such. Depression carries a high risk of suicide. Young people often feel that they have nowhere to turn to.

Causes/precipitators of suicidal behavior

Depression

Family problems (unstable family live, violence, abuse)

Physical or sexual trauma/abuse

High stress levels

Interpersonal relationship problems

Risky behaviour e.g. substance abuse

Poverty, unemployment

Characteristics of adolescents who make suicide attempts

Medication overdose is the most common method used

High incidence of family pathology and psychiatric disorders

History of suicide/suicide attempts in the family

Often impulsive

Nearly always an immediate precipitant e.g. conflict with parents, breaking up with boy/girlfriend, disciplinary crisis at school

Warning signs

Sudden behavioural changes, risk-taking behaviour

Depression, feelings of hopelessness

Feelings of guilt, sense of failure

Withdrawal

Changes in eating/sleeping patterns



Pre-occupation with death/dying

What to do

If you are feeling depressed or suicidal, seek immediate help from a health professional. Each suicide attempt requires thorough and professional evaluation and management.

Suicide crisis line: 0800 567 567 or sms 31393

Lifeline Western Cape: 021 461 1111

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mental Health Information Centre of Southern Africa (MHIC)
PO Box 19063, Tygerberg, Cape Town, 7505, South Africa

Tel: +27 (0)21 938-9229

Fax: +27 (0)21 931-4172

Email: mhic@sun.ac.za

www.mentalhealthsa.org.za