10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SUICIDE BASED ON RECENT RESEARCH

Pediatricians are on the front lines when it comes to helping youth at risk for suicide. For more information and resources, visit OnOurSleeves.org/for-medical-professionals.

1. Don’t be afraid to ask a child about suicide. You will not put the idea in their head or increase risk of engaging in suicidal behavior. Ask direct, concrete questions with a willingness to hear the answer “yes” to those questions.

2. Consider upstream prevention strategies. Screening for suicide with a validated tool such as the ASQ can be done safely with children as young as 8.

3. Suicidal thoughts and behaviors are not a typical response to stress. They often reflect deep emotional pain that should be supported in a timely and compassionate way.

4. Suicide and suicidal behavior is increasing among young females. Although males still die by suicide more often than females, this gender gap is closing.

5. Exposure matters. Sensational portrayals of suicide that depict graphic methods of death can increase rates of suicide, particularly among vulnerable youth. Ask children questions about exposure to suicide in the media or among friends or family, which can contribute to contagion.

6. Develop a collaborative safety plan with youth at risk for suicide and their families including:
   • Strategies for emotional triggers, helpful distractions, coping skills, support persons
   • A plan to reduce access to lethal means – remove firearms and objects that can be used to hang or suffocate, lock up sharp objects, poisons and medications
   • Crisis resources and reasons for living

7. Promoting hope, connectedness, safety and timely treatment is a critical first step for youth at risk for suicide.

8. Take all disclosure about suicide seriously. If it is the 1st or 50th time, the expression of suicidal thoughts by a child should be taken seriously and needs to be evaluated.

9. Stay calm. You are a person who can help and offer support. An empathetic and curious approach is likely to allow a child the space to talk about what they are going through.

10. Know suicide hotline numbers:
   • Franklin County Crisis Hotline for youth: (under 18): (614) 722-1800
   • Crisis text support: Text “4HOPE” to 741-741
   • National suicide prevention lifeline: 1-800-273-8255