

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 if your family member has given them consent to speak to you.
- Encourage and help your family member to stay away from alcohol and other drugs.
- Create a support network of family and friends who can accompany your family member to health care appointments or other places they find stressful.
- Keep a copy of your family member's safety plan (if there is one, and they are willing to share it), so you know what steps to take to keep your family member safe.
- Keep crisis line numbers handy (program them into your family member's phone, and your own). See the "Resources" section of this pamphlet for numbers to call.
- Obtain a Form 2 from a justice of the peace if you are concerned your family member is a risk to themselves or others (www.ontariocourts.ca/ocej). It allows police to take the person to hospital for assessment. A physician will assess the person to see if they should be put on a Form 1—if so, they may be kept in hospital for up to 72 hours for emergency assessment. Using a Form 2 can harm the relationship you have with your family member, so consider it carefully.

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 family member 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?

- Making a suicide attempt
- Preparing for a suicide attempt—for example, collecting medications, trying to get access to a weapon, 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, pacing excessively, 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.**”

I Ideation (suicidal thoughts)

S Substance abuse

P Purposelessness

A Anxiety

T Trapped

H Hopelessness/helplessness

W Withdrawal

A Anger

R Recklessness

M Mood changes

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 your family member is attempting or about to attempt suicide and you are not at risk, do not leave them alone—call 911.
- 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 or a crisis line.
- 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 family member—try to stay supportive and calm.