

Screening for suicide risk and suicide precautions



What is screening for suicide risk?

Your child's health and safety is our main concern. There are national safety guidelines we aim to follow to help keep your child safe. If your child comes to the hospital with a behavioral and mental health concern, then we will screen them for suicide risk.

- Hospital staff will ask you to step out/away from your child's room for a few minutes.
- A care team member will ask your child some questions about suicide risk in private.
- We will let you know if there are any concerns about your child's safety.

What else do I need to know?

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death for youth from 10 to 19 years old.

- It is safe to ask your child questions about suicide.
- Asking questions is very important to help prevent suicide.
- Research has shown that it will not harm your child to ask them about thoughts of suicide. Asking your child about suicide does not cause your child to have thoughts of suicide.

For parents/guardian whose child is at risk of suicide

What if my child is at risk?

- If your child is at risk for suicide, we will begin suicide precautions to help keep them safe.
- A licensed behavioral and mental health clinician will ask more questions.

What are suicide precautions?

Suicide precautions are a way to help protect your child from harming themselves or attempting suicide while in the hospital. If your child has been found to be at risk for suicide, then your child's care team will choose the level of suicide precautions advised for your child. The levels are:

Level red suicide precautions	Level yellow suicide precautions	Level green suicide precautions
High risk of suicide	Moderate risk of suicide	Low risk of suicide
Staff member stays with child at all times	Staff member stays with child or watches child by video at all times	Staff member does not need to stay with or watch by video at all times, but they will watch for any changes

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Screening for suicide risk and suicide precautions, continued

How will my child’s care team create a safe environment?

It is important to make your child’s room as safe as possible during their hospital stay.

Safety precaution by level of suicide risk	Level red high risk of suicide	Level yellow moderate risk of suicide	Level green low risk of suicide
Monitoring	Staff member stays with child at all times	Staff member stays with child or watches child by video at all times	Staff member does not need to stay with or watch by video at all times
Safety sweep	Yes	Yes	No
Safe meal tray	Yes	Yes	No
Visitors other than legal guardian allowed	No	Yes	Yes
Child may leave room	No	Yes	Yes
Child can access electronics with internet	No	Yes	Yes

Your child’s care team will:

- Do a safety sweep often and at any time new items are brought to your child’s room. Items that may pose a risk for harm will need to be removed. A safety sweep is a thorough search of:
 - Your child
 - Your child’s things
 - Your things
 - Your child’s room and bathroom
- Ask you to help watch for things that might be dangerous.

What is a safety sweep?

During a safety sweep, the care team will remove items that may put your child at risk for harm. This includes, but is not limited to the items listed on page 3.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Screening for suicide risk and suicide precautions, continued

Things that may cause your child to choke or suffocate	Things that are sharp	Things that may cause a burn	Things that your child may try to swallow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic bags • Belts or scarves • Shoestrings • Clothing with drawstrings • Electronic devices with cords/chargers • Tape • Large rubber bands • Jewelry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Razor • Nail clippers • Piercings • Pocket knife • Mirror • Pencils or pens • Scissors • Staples or paperclips • Soda cans • Popsicle sticks • Metal silverware 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blow dryer • Curling iron • Lighter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicines • Cleaning solutions • Batteries • Toiletries

The care team will provide a safe place to store items (such as car keys, purse, wallet, bag or medicines) during your child’s hospital stay. You may choose to return these items to your car.

How can I best support my child while they are on suicide precautions?

- Listen and talk calmly to your child.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Tell your child’s nurse right away if your child:
 - Tells you something important about their feelings.
 - Talks or acts in a way that you feel they may harm themselves.
- Share with your child why the environment is controlled. Tell them that safety is everyone’s main concern.
- Take care of yourself.
 - Ask for help from family and friends.
 - Take breaks when you need them.
 - Social workers and chaplains are here to help support you. There is also a chapel for you to use.

Thank you for your support. Please talk with your child’s doctor if you have any questions about your child’s safety.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.