



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

**Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

## **At-Home Safety Guide for Self-Harm or Suicide**

When your child is having self-harm or suicidal thoughts, there are things you can do to help keep them safe. This handout gives guidance for ways to support your child at this time. Keep having discussions about your child's safety with their doctor or health care providers.

### **Safety Plan**

- Your child will have a personal safety plan. This is a plan that helps them stay safe. A safety plan is a list of coping strategies and sources of support that your child can use before or during a self-harm or suicidal crisis. It should include:
  - Coping strategies.
  - Personal warning signs.
  - Ways to stay safe at school.
  - People or places that can provide a distraction.
  - Trusted adults they can contact for help (Picture 1).
  - Ways to keep the environment safe.
- Make a few copies of their safety plan. It should be easy to find. The plan can be on paper or stored on a phone.
- Make a safety plan that meets your child's needs at school. Talk to designated staff at your child's school, such as a school counselor or administrator.



**Picture 1** There should be adults in your child's life that they can trust.

## How to Keep Your Child Safe

It's important for you to know where your child is at all times.

- When they're home, check on them often. Do this even if it seems like they're doing fine.
- Tell them where you are. This way, if they need you, they can get to you quickly.
- There must be a trusted adult around your child at all times.
  - This includes visits with family or friends.
  - This adult should monitor your child and support the use of their safety plan.
  - Tell this adult about all safety measures that will keep your child safe.

## Talking to Your Child

- Let your child know you are there to listen. Be there when they would like to talk about their thoughts or feelings.
- Make time to learn about suicidal urges or behaviors and self-injury.
- Sometimes children aren't able to explain the reasons they have for self-harm. Be aware of how your child is feeling. Let them know that you're there to support and help them.
- Your child will likely have the chance to have a deeper discussion about these thoughts, urges, and behaviors with a mental health counselor.
- Use the support systems and coping strategies you have learned.

## Keep Your Home Safe

Use the chart below as a starting point for keeping your home safe. Check all areas of your home including the garage, basement, toolshed, your child's backpack, and their car.

Medicine		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over-the-counter (OTC)</li><li>• Prescription</li><li>• Vitamins</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Use a lock box to store and secure all medicine.</li><li>– Get rid of any medicine that is expired, no longer being taken, or not needed.</li><li>– Keep track of how much medicine you should have.</li></ul>	
Guns (firearms)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Firearms</li><li>• Ammunition</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Do not keep firearms in the home.</li><li>– If you own firearms, keep them in a secure gun safe.</li><li>– Keep ammunition stored separately from firearms.</li></ul>	

Sharp objects – examples		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knives</li> <li>Scissors</li> <li>Razors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety pins</li> <li>Nails</li> <li>Needles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lock up all sharp objects.</li> <li>– Look through your whole home for these items.</li> <li>– These items could be anywhere in your home like the garage, basement, or toolshed.</li> </ul>
Other dangerous items – examples		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ropes</li> <li>Alcohol</li> <li>Extension cords</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belts</li> <li>Drugs</li> <li>Cleaning products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lock up all of these items. Making sure your child can't get to them is not enough to keep them safe.</li> <li>– All family members need to check for these items.</li> <li>– Think about removing them from the home entirely.</li> </ul>

## Emergency Action

If your child mentions wanting to harm themselves, **always take it seriously**. This includes comments about dying, self-harm, or an attempt to end their life.

Act right away on your child's comments. Call your child's doctor or health care provider. You can also contact any of these services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- Nationwide Children's Hospital and Franklin County Youth Psychiatric Crisis Line
  - Call (614) 722-1800
  - Visit <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/specialties/behavioral-health>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  - Call 1 (800) 273-TALK (8255)
  - Call or text 988
- Crisis Text Line
  - Text "4HOPE" to 741-741
- Call 911 or take your child to the closest emergency room.

## Follow-up

If your child has been seen at a hospital, they must have a follow-up appointment scheduled. Ask the health care provider working with your child to schedule a follow-up appointment.

Even if everything seems fine, you need to keep follow-up as discussed when your child leaves the hospital.