

Suicidal Ideation (Suicidal Thoughts)

Overview

Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts or preoccupation with death or suicide. While these thoughts don't always lead to action, they can be a warning sign. Treatment is available.

What is suicidal ideation?

Suicidal ideation varies by person—ranging from passive thoughts (e.g., wishing not to wake up) to active planning. It can escalate without intervention.

Key Statistics

- 5% of U.S. adults experience suicidal thoughts annually.
- 18% of U.S. children under 18 consider suicide.

Types of Suicidal Ideation

- **Passive:** Thoughts without a plan to act.
- **Active:** Thoughts with intent or a plan (e.g., giving away valuables).

Diagnosis

Healthcare providers use assessments like the **Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS)** to evaluate severity. Sample questions:

- "Have you wished you were dead?"
- "Do you have a suicide plan?"

Common Causes

- Mental health conditions (depression, anxiety, psychosis).
- Biological/genetic factors.
- Stress, trauma, or interpersonal conflicts.
- Substance use disorders.

Treatment Options

- **Safety plans** with coping strategies and emergency contacts.
- **Therapy** (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy).
- **Medications** for underlying conditions.
- **Inpatient/outpatient programs** for severe cases.

Immediate Help

- Call/text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) for 24/7 support.
- Confide in a trusted person.
- Avoid alcohol/drugs.

Complications

Untreated ideation can lead to self-harm or suicide.

****Prevention****

While thoughts can't always be prevented, early intervention reduces risks. Warning signs include:

- Social withdrawal.
- Expressing hopelessness.

****When to Seek Help****

- If thoughts persist or escalate.
- If you've made a plan.
- If you're using substances to cope.