

# SAFETY SENSE

## Responding To A Suicide Emergency

(NAPSA)—Each day in the United States, 85 people commit suicide and about 2,000 people attempt it. Emergency physicians all too often see self-inflicted injuries, particularly by teenagers who are attempting to end their lives. Nearly \$41.3 million is spent each year saving those who try to kill themselves.

“Suicide can be prevented if people learn to recognize the signs of a suicidal person before he attempts to end his life,” said Toni Mitchell, MD, of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP). “If you or someone you know suffers from depression, substance abuse, or has ongoing thoughts of death or suicide or if a suicide attempt has been made, contact a physician or mental health professional.”

If someone is threatening to commit suicide, take it seriously. Be calm and follow these steps from ACEP to help you manage the crisis:

- Don't try to handle a suicide threat or attempt alone. Involve other people. You don't want to risk your own health and safety.

- Call 911 or the local emergency response number, if necessary. Contact the person's doctor, the police, a crisis intervention team, or others who are trained to help.

- While waiting for help to arrive, listen closely to the person. Let the person know you are listening by maintaining eye contact, moving close to the person or holding his or her hand, if appropriate.

- Ask the person questions. Find out if the person has a specific plan for suicide. Try to determine what method of suicide the person is considering.

- Acknowledge the person's feelings. Be understanding, not



**If a person is contemplating suicide, don't try to handle it alone. Get other people involved.**

judgmental or argumentative.

- Remind the person help is available and things will get better. Stress to the person that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

- Don't promise the person threatening suicide that you will keep this confidential. You may need to speak to a physician or mental health professional in order to protect the person from injury.

- Don't leave a suicidal person alone until you are sure they are in the hands of competent professionals. If you have to leave, make sure another friend or family member can stay with the person until they can receive professional help.

- If a person attempts suicide, immediately call for emergency medical assistance. Administer first aid, if necessary. If you know the person swallowed poison or drugs, call the Poison Control Center. Be prepared with the name of the poison or drug used.