

ADOLESCENCE

MANAGEMENT OF ADOLESCENT SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract: *Suicide is one of the leading causes of adolescent mortality globally and in India. Genetic susceptibility, underlying psychiatric illness and negative life events make vulnerable adolescents take this drastic step. Questions about suicidal ideation should be asked during routine HEEADSSS assessment in non-judgmental manner and those with suicidal ideation should be asked about the intent and plan and need detailed evaluation for risk stratification. In addition to screening and detailed evaluation, initial counselling should be done by the pediatrician and consultation with a mental health specialist must be arranged on an emergency basis.*

Keywords: *Suicide, Adolescents, Risk stratification, Safety planning, Prevention.*

Points to Remember

- *Adolescence is the period with high vulnerability to various high risk behaviours. Suicide is one of the top causes of adolescent mortality in India and is the result of interplay of genetic and multiple environmental factors.*
- *Adolescents do not reveal suicidal thoughts unless asked and hence screening for psychosocial issues should be performed in all of them beyond the presenting complaints.*
- *Assessment of suicidal behavior includes current suicidal ideation, intent, plan, past attempts and assessment of risk as well as protective factors.*
- *Many of the adolescents exhibit one or more of the warning signs which need to be recognized by the caretakers. Any suicidal threat should be taken seriously.*
- *Screening tools should only supplement and not replace thorough clinical evaluation*
- *Management depends on the risk stratification and referral to mental health specialist is a must in all those with suicidal ideation.*
- *Safety planning intervention should be given to the at-risk adolescent who should be educated to use the same during crisis.*
- *Many suicidal attempts are preventable with adequate training of 'the gate keepers'.*

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