





Risk for Suicide

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

Your child's health is our top priority. Based on an assessment by your child's Health Care Team, they have determined that your child is a risk for suicide. Our goal is to partner with you to help keep your child safe while in the hospital.

Your child will have a primary medical team for their health care needs. We will also consult our **Behavioral Health Integrated Program (BHIP)** to evaluate your child's mental health and participate in their care. In addition to BHIP recommendations, the medical team will need to do all of the following for your child's safety:

1. Provide a Safety Observer 
2. Ask Questions about Suicide and Safety 
3. Conduct Routine Searches 
4. Provide a "Safer Tray" for Meals 

We encourage you to participate in all parts of your child's treatment plan. Please reach out to any member of the care team if you have questions or concerns. You are an important member of your child's treatment team and we want to partner with you.

1. Provide a Safety Observer

The Safety Observer is a member your child's care team. They will help to keep your child safe and free from harm during their stay at CHOP.



- Your child will now have a safety observer with them (also called a **One-to-One**). This person will be with your child at all times, even when using the bathroom or shower. A **safety observer** is a staff member who will support your child and help keep them safe from harm.
- For safety reasons, your child cannot go to other areas of the hospital, except for medical procedures. Walks on the unit can be allowed after consulting with the care team. The safety observer will also provide support during walks.
- Having someone at the bedside 24 hours a day can be uncomfortable. Please talk with the safety observer about how you can partner together for the care of your child. Our safety observers do their best to balance safety with personal privacy needs. However, the safety of your child will always come first.

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2. Ask Questions about Suicide and Safety

During their stay at the hospital, your child will be routinely asked questions about suicidal thoughts or plans to hurt themselves.



- Hearing your child talk about wanting to harm themselves can be difficult. However, like taking your child's temperature or asking about pain, these questions are important to help us support your child and meet their safety needs.
- At times, a care team member may ask to talk with your child privately. We are grateful for your understanding and support as we take into consideration your child's possible need for privacy.

3. Conduct Routine Searches

An important part of keeping your child safe is keeping their surroundings as safe as possible.



- Because unsafe items can be hidden in clothing, your child will need to change into a hospital gown. For their safety, your child can only wear hospital gowns, scrub pants, and non-slip hospital socks. Underwear from home and a wireless bra are also allowed.
- **Room Searches** (also known as Room Sweeps) are searches of your child's room and belongings. Room Searches will happen multiple times a day during their stay. Our staff are trained to know which items can be used in harmful ways and will remove items that could place your child at risk.
- We ask that parents take unsafe belongings home. Otherwise, your child's belongings will be stored away and kept out of reach.
- All parents, caregivers and visitors are asked to keep their own belongings out of reach (in a far corner, in a cabinet, or closet) and take their belongings home with them at the end of each visit.
- If you plan to bring in any items for your child, please check-in with the bedside nurse first. New items will need to be assessed for safety before giving them to your child.



Common items that may be removed from your child's room are jewelry, clothing, shoes, coats/jackets, makeup, arts and crafts, spiral notebooks, luggage, plastic bags, plastic bottles, home medication, personal care products, electronics, and charging cords.

4. Provide a “Safer Tray” for meals

Your child’s meals will be served on a Safer Tray. A **Safer Tray** does not have items that might be harmful, like metal utensils.



- A Safer Tray menu will be used for all in-room meal orders. You are welcome to eat with your child and will also receive a safer tray.
- Safer Trays include only paper items (no plastic, ceramic or metal) with exception of a single plastic spoon. Most food items are finger foods or chopped to be eaten with a spoon. No hot liquids (drinks/soups/oatmeal) are served.
- All snacks or meals brought to the room must be checked by bedside nurse. The nurse will remove any unsafe items (such as plastic or glass bottles, aluminum cans, utensils, plastic bags, hot liquids). All bottled or canned drinks must be poured into a cup, provided by unit staff.

❖ Other Supports and Services

Support comes in many forms, so we offer therapeutic opportunities during your child’s stay at CHOP.



- Our Child Life Services team is available to participate in your child’s care. They can provide safe games, crafts, and other activities.
- Your child’s care team will determine if Physical Therapy, Occupational Health therapy, Integrative Health therapy, or Pet therapy is appropriate for their needs.
- Your child is welcome to continue with schoolwork and attend virtual classes. Talk with the care team about how we can support their participation together with your child’s care needs. Families can reach out to their child’s school about how best to keep up with class work. If you need further support, your child’s hospital social worker may be able to help.

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Additional Resources:

CHOP: Youth Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Research Center

<https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/child-and-adolescent-psychiatry-and-behavioral-sciences>



Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide: Talking to Your Kids about Suicide

http://www.sptsusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Talking_to_your_Kids_About_Suicide.pdf



Suicide Prevention Resource Center: Youth

<https://www.sprc.org/populations/youth>



American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: Suicide in Children and Teens

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Teen-Suicide-010.aspx



Written 6/17; Revised 4/22

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