

Suicide Safety Protocol

The PHQ-9 is administered at each study visit. If a participant endorses anything other than “not at all” to question 9 (thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself), or reports suicidal ideation at any point during the study (e.g., intervention session, study visit, phone call), research staff will follow the following steps.

On the Call

Make notes while the participant is speaking.

1. Say, **“I appreciate you answering these questions so honestly, and I care about your safety – would you mind sharing a little bit more about the thoughts that you mentioned for that last question, ‘thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself?’”**
2. If not already clear from what they have said, ask, **“Have you been thinking about how you would hurt yourself or end your life?”**
 - a. If no: say, **“Thank you for clarifying – I know these thoughts can be difficult to talk about.”** Skip to step 3.
 - b. If yes: **“Do you have any specific plans to harm yourself at this time?”**
 - i. If no: say, **“Thank you for clarifying – I know these thoughts can be difficult to talk about.”** Skip to step 3.
 - ii. If yes: say, **“It sounds like you’ve been thinking about this a lot, and I’m sorry to hear that you’re struggling with these thoughts. Have you thought about when you would carry out this plan?”**
 1. If no, or yes but not within 24 hours: say, **“Thank you for clarifying – I know these thoughts can be difficult to talk about.”** Skip to step 3.
 2. If yes within 24 hours: say, **“I appreciate your honesty and for sharing this with me – I want to help keep you safe. Would you be willing to admit yourself to a hospital?”** If the subject is unwilling, call 911.
3. Say, **“Have you ever attempted suicide in the past?”**
 - a. If yes: “How long ago was that?”
 - b. If no: Skip to step 4.
4. Say, **“Are you currently seeing a therapist or under the care of a psychiatrist?”**
 - a. If yes: **“What kind of treatment are you receiving (e.g., medication or therapy)? Please contact your provider to let them know how you are feeling so they can follow up with you.”**
 - b. If no: **“I will send you a list of resources to help you find a therapist or psychiatrist.”** Ask the participant how he/she would like to receive the list (e.g., email, text, mail).
5. Say, **“We do make a record of everyone’s answers to these questions, and a study psychiatrist or investigator may be in touch to follow up with you.”**

After the Call

1. Regardless of the participant’s answers, research staff will notify the PI or a clinic psychiatrist immediately after this assessment. Research staff will share the participant’s name, MRN, phone number, and answers to the above questions.
2. The PI or psychiatrist will decide on next steps, such as reaching out to the participant.
3. Research staff will inform the participant’s neurologist of this protocol and its results.
4. Research staff will draft a note-to-file summarizing the situation. The PI or psychiatrist will review and sign this document.