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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Start Talking!



Building a Drug-Free Future

## Know! Concerns Validated on *13 Reasons Why*



As youth take time to kick back and relax this summer, many will choose to binge-watch their favorite shows on streaming services like Netflix. But parents beware, there is a popular teen drama you may want to steer your tweens/teens away from—*13 Reasons Why*.

Centered around the suicide of a teenage girl who exacts her revenge in death, mental health professionals were concerned with the show's content since it was first released in 2017. They feared it could spark an increase in suicides; a phenomenon called 'suicide contagion.' Law enforcement and school officials around the nation shared in the concern, warning parents that suicide is now the second leading cause of death among teens and that watching *13 Reasons Why* may increase thoughts of suicide among this impressionable age group.

Those concerns have now been validated, as researchers from Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio share their findings in the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Researchers analyzed monthly rates of suicide between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2017 among 10-64-year-olds. The study revealed that one month following the premiere of *13 Reasons Why*, suicide rates were at their highest for youth ages 10-17, an increase of 28.9%. Furthermore, it was discovered that around 195 more suicides occurred than expected in the nine months after the first season premiered.

"Youth may be particularly susceptible to suicide contagion, which can be fostered by stories that sensationalize or promote simplistic explanations of suicidal behavior, glorify or romanticize the decedent, present suicide as a means of accomplishing a goal, or offer potential prescriptions of how-to die by suicide," said Jeff Bridge, director of the Center for Suicide Prevention and Research at Nationwide Children's and the lead author of the study.

Youth who haven't seen this series for themselves may have plans to catch it this summer, as it has been widely popular among middle and high school students. However, in addition to suicide, there are multiple graphic, physical, and sexual assaults that occur among these teens and plenty of



Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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alcohol and drug use (on top of bad language). It is not at all appropriate for middle school youth. If you allow your older teen to watch it, it's a good idea to watch it with them or on your own, then take time to discuss the various themes. This is certainly not the only questionable teen drama out there, so it is up to us as parents to keep an eye on what our children are tuning into this summer.

Critics give accolades to this series while health professionals remain concerned. One thing for sure is that *13 Reasons Why* has continued to generate discussion on the topic of suicide. Let this serve as a reminder to get a potentially life-saving conversation started with your child.

Here are some additional resources to help with your talk:

- [Know! The Facts on Youth Suicide](#)
- [Nationwide Children's Hospital: On Our Sleeves](#)
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK \(8255\) – Immediate help 24/7](#)

Sources: [John Ackerman, PhD. Nationwide Children's Hospital: 13 Reasons Why: Should Parents Be Concerned About This Netflix Series? April 13, 2017. CNBC, Berkeley Lovelace Jr., Teen suicides spiked month after Netflix's drama '13 Reasons Why' premiered, new research shows. April 29, 2019. Nationwide Children's Hospital, Suicide Rates Spike Nationally Among Youth After "13 Reasons Why" Release. April 29, 2019.](#)