

Suicide in America

Suicide is a major public health concern. Around 30,000 people die each year in the United States from suicide.

Suicide is tragic, yet often preventable, and knowing the risk factors and who's at risk can help reduce the suicide rate.

Who is at Risk for suicide?

Suicide does not discriminate. People of all genders, ages and ethnicities are at risk for suicide.

The main risk factors include:

- Personal history of depression, other mental disorders or substance abuse
- Personal history of prior suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- History of family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Incarceration, being in prison or jail

What about gender?

Men are more likely to die by suicide than women, but women are more likely to attempt suicide. Men are more likely to use deadlier methods, such as firearms while women are more likely than men to attempt suicide by poisoning.

What about children and adolescents?

Children and adolescents are at risk for suicide. Year after year, suicide remains one of the top three leading causes of death for young people ages 15-24 and has nearly quadrupled over the last 60 years. Suicidal behavior in young adults is usually the result of a process that involves multiple social, economic, and individual risk factors.

What about older adults?

The highest suicide rates of any age group occur among persons age 65 and older. In fact, white males age 85 and older consistently have the highest suicide rate overall.

What about different ethnic groups?

Among ethnicities, American Indians and Alaskan Natives tend to have the highest rate of suicides, followed by non-Hispanic Whites. Hispanics tend to have the lowest rate of suicide, while African Americans tend to have the second lowest rate.

Signs and symptoms that someone may be suicidal

- Talking about suicide
- Depressed mood

- Dramatic mood changes
- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Expressing feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, shame or guilt
- Preoccupation with death or dying
- Giving away items of personal or monetary value
- Signs of planning a suicide such as obtaining a weapon or writing a suicide note

What should I do if someone I know is considering suicide?

If someone tells you that they are considering suicide, take them seriously.

- Do not leave them alone
- Try to get them to seek immediate help from a doctor or the nearest emergency room, or call 911
- Remove any access to firearms or other potential tools for suicide, including medications

Did you know?

- 70% of people who commit suicide tell someone about it in advance, and most are not in treatment
- Sometimes those contemplating suicide talk as if they are saying goodbye or going away forever
- Nearly 50% of suicide victims have a positive blood alcohol level
- Although most depressed people are not suicidal, most suicidal people are depressed
- Serious depression can be manifested in obvious sadness, but often is expressed instead as a loss of pleasure or withdrawal from activities that were once enjoyable
- Between 20-40% of people who kill themselves have previously attempted suicide
- Those who have made serious suicide attempts before are at much higher risk for actually taking their lives



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