

Preventing Suicide

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the U.S. An average of 100 Americans die each day. This is more than twice the number of homicides. Suicide is a major public health concern. The topic is not easy to discuss. But we are now more aware of its effects on families and communities.

Suicide is tragic. But it can be prevented. Knowing the risk factors and who is at risk can help. And there are many ways people can get help.

What are the risk factors?

Risk factors vary with age, gender or ethnic group. They include:

- Depression or other mental illness.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Prior suicide attempts.
- Family history of suicide.
- Family violence.
- Physical illness.
- Having guns in the home.
- Being in prison or in jail.
- Seeing suicidal behavior in others.

Note: People may have some of these risk factors but do not attempt suicide.

Who is most at risk?

Some groups are more at risk than others:

- Young adults age 15- 29.
- Older adults.
- American Indian and Alaska natives.
- Active or retired military personnel.
- People in rural areas.

It is more common in men than in women.

What are the warning signs?

People at risk may:

- Talk about wanting to die.
- Give away their possessions.
- Feel alone or hopeless.
- Feel trapped or in pain.

- Increase the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Sleep too little or too much.
- Withdraw from others.
- Show rage.
- Talk about getting revenge.
- Have extreme mood swings.

Suicide is a sign of extreme distress. It is not a harmless bid for attention.

What can I do for myself or someone I care about?

Get help right away if you are in crisis. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). This is a toll-free number. You will reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Someone is available 24 hours a day, every day. The service is open to anyone. You may call for yourself. Or for someone you care about. All calls are confidential.

Resources

- American Association of Suicidology (AAS): www.suicidology.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP): www.afsp.org
- National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC)/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention
- CDC Facebook page on violence prevention: www.facebook.com/vetoviolenace
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH): www.nimh.nih.gov
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): www.samhsa.gov
- Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Suicide: www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calltoaction
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC): www.sprc.org
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE): www.save.org

Content of this document has been adapted from the websites of the National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov) and the Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov).

This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Health Services does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.