

Suicide Prevention Facts & Stats

- For middle and high school age youth (ages 12-18), suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death. *
- For college age youth (ages 18-22), suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death. *
- Over-all, suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for our youth ages 10-24. * (*2014 CDC WISQARS)

In ages 10-14, we have seen an alarming 128% increase in suicides since 1980, making it the third leading cause of death for that age group.

More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease, **COMBINED**. Each day in our nation, there are an average of over 5,240 attempts by young people grades 7-12.

Four out of **Five** teens that attempt suicide have given clear warning signs.

Risk Factors

Suicide does not typically have a sudden onset. There are a number of stressors that can contribute to a youth's anxiety and unhappiness, increasing the possibility of a suicide attempt. A number of them are described below.

Depression, Mental Illness and Substance Abuse

One of the most telling risk factors for youth is mental illness. Mental or addictive disorders are associated with 90% of suicides. One in ten youth suffer from mental illness serious enough to be impaired, yet fewer than 20 percent receive treatment. In fact, 60% of those who complete suicide suffer from depression. Alcohol and drug use, which clouds judgment, lowers inhibitions, and worsens depression, are associated with 50-67% of suicides.

Aggression and Fighting

Recent research has identified a connection between interpersonal violence and suicide. Suicide is associated with fighting for both males and females, across all ethnic groups, and for youth living in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Home Environment

Within the home, a lack of cohesion, high levels of violence and conflict, a lack of parental support and alienation from and within the family.

Community Environment

Youth with high levels of exposure to community violence are at serious risk for self-destructive behavior. This can occur when a youth models his or her own behavior after what is experienced in the community. Additionally, more youth are growing up without

making meaningful connections with adults, and therefore are not getting the guidance they need to help them cope with their daily lives.

School Environment

Youth who are struggling with classes, perceive their teachers as not understanding them or caring about them, or have poor relationships with their peers have increased vulnerability.

Previous Attempts

Youth who have attempted suicide are at risk to do it again. In fact, they are eight times more likely than youth who have never attempted suicide to make another suicide attempt.

Cultural Factors

Changes in gender roles and expectations, issues of conformity and assimilation, and feelings of isolation and victimization can all increase the stress levels and vulnerability of individuals. Additionally, in some cultures (particularly Asian and Pacific cultures), suicide may be seen as a rational response to shame.

Family History/Stresses

A history of mental illness and suicide among immediate family members place youth at greater risk for suicide. Exacerbating these circumstances are changes in family structure such as death, divorce, remarriage, moving to a new city, and financial instability.

Self-mutilation

Self-mutilation or self-harm behaviors include head banging, cutting, burning, biting, erasing, and digging at wounds. These behaviors are becoming increasingly common among youth, especially female youth. While self-injury typically signals the occurrence of broader problems, the reason for this behavior can vary from peer group pressure to severe emotional disturbance. Although help should be sought for any individual who is causing self-harm, an appropriate response is crucial. Because most self-mutilation behaviors are not suicide attempts, it is important to be cautious when reaching out to the youth and not to make assumptions.

Situational Crises

Approximately 40% of youth suicides are associated with an identifiable precipitating event, such as the death of a loved one, loss of a valued relationship, parental divorce, or sexual abuse. Typically, these events coincide with other risk factors.

Warning Signs

Four out of five teens that attempt suicide give clear warning signs.

Warning Signs of suicidal ideation include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Talking about suicide
- Making statements about feeling hopeless, helpless, or worthless

- A deepening depression
- Preoccupation with death
- Taking unnecessary risks or exhibiting self-destructive behavior
- Out of character behavior
- A loss of interest in the things one cares about
- Visiting or calling people one cares about
- Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order
- Giving prized possessions away

Along with these warning signs, there are certain Risk Factors that can elevate the possibility of suicidal ideation.

- Perfectionist personalities
- Gay and Lesbian youth
- Learning disabled youth
- Loners
- Youth with low self- esteem
- Depressed youth
- Students in serious trouble
- Abused, Molested or Neglected Youth
- Genetic predisposition
- Parental history of violence, substance abuse, or divorce

You may be the first and last person to see these signs in a young person.

Get Help

If you or someone you know are experiencing a crisis, call 911.

If you or a friend need to talk with a counselor for help or for resources available in your area, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), a free, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Your call will be routed to the nearest crisis center to you.