

FAST FACTS

Suicide: Warning Signs, Fast Facts, and Risk Factors

Suicide Facts

The most important fact to know: Suicide is preventable.

Every 16.2 minutes, one person dies of suicide — which means that every year we have the chance to save approximately 30,000 lives. Key to saving these lives is understanding that it's often a combination of factors (versus one sole reason) that lead to suicide. If every suicide on average affects at least 6 other people, that means the potential to better the lives of 210,000 Americans in the next year. That's roughly the population of Tacoma, Washington.

In order to prevent suicide, we first have to learn how to recognize the warning signs and risk factors of suicide.

Suicide Risk Factors

Risk factors for suicide are internal or external conditions that increase the likelihood of a suicide attempt. This list is adapted directly from the list developed by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Consider each factor if you suspect someone you know is at risk.

HEALTH FACTORS

1. Depression
2. Substance use problems
3. Bipolar disorder
4. Schizophrenia
5. Conduct disorder
6. Anxiety disorder
7. Chronic pain or other serious health condition
8. Traumatic brain injury

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Several circumstances in a person's world can increase their likelihood of a suicide attempt. These include:

1. Access to lethal means
2. Prolonged stress
3. Stressful life events or major life changes
4. Exposure to suicide, including loss of a loved one or graphic portrayal in media

HISTORICAL FACTORS

Historical factors in a person's life are generally defined as personal connections to suicide or trauma. Three key risk factors experts and mental health professionals look for are:

1. Previous suicide attempts
2. Family history of suicide
3. Childhood abuse, neglect, or trauma

Warning Signs

Look for these warning signs if you're concerned that someone you know is at risk of suicide. Nearly all people who die by suicide show at least one of these signs. This list is also adapted directly from the list developed by American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

What They Say

A person with suicidal thoughts may threaten suicide by talking about:

1. Killing themselves - "I think about all the time about ending my life."
2. Feeling hopeless - "There's no point in trying."
3. Having no reason to live - "I don't feel like a reason to go on."
4. Being a burden to others - "All I do is hurt other people"
5. Feeling trapped - "I don't know what to do anymore. There's no way out."
6. Unbearable pain (physical or emotional) - "I just want all this pain to go away."

What They Do

A person who is suicidal might:

1. Start using more alcohol and drugs
2. Look for ways to end their lives, including online searches for possible methods
3. Withdraw from activities
4. Isolate from family, friends, and loved ones
5. Sleep too much or too little
6. "Say their goodbyes" to others
7. Give away valued possessions
8. Become aggressive
9. Become fatigued

How They Feel

A person actively thinking about suicide might show that they feel:

1. Depressed
2. Anxious
3. Uninterested in activities they once enjoyed
4. Irritable
5. Humiliated

6. Agitated
7. Enraged

What can you do?

If you're concerned that someone may attempt to take their life, take your concerns seriously.

You can:

1. Encourage them to reach out for help, including contacting Crisis Text Line at 741741 in the United States or 686868 in Canada.
2. Text Crisis Text Line on their behalf at 741741 (in the United States) or 686868 (in Canada)
3. If you believe the person is at critical and immediate risk, call 911.