

Tip Sheet: Understanding Suicide

Suicide is a serious public health concern that causes immeasurable pain, suffering and loss to individuals, families and communities nationwide. The causes of suicide are complex and determined by multiple combinations of factors, such as mental illness, substance use, painful losses, exposure to violence and social isolation.

Nearly 48,000 people in the United States die from suicide annually, or 1 person every 13 minutes. This exceeds the rate of death from homicide and AIDS combined. More people die by suicide than from automobile accidents.

The suicide rate has been rising over the past decade, with much of the increase driven by suicides in mid-life, where the majority of all suicides in the United States now occur. From 1999 to 2018, the age-adjusted suicide rate for all ages in the United States increased (10.5% to 14.2%). Half of these deaths occur by use of a firearm. In 2018, the latest year for which data is available, the highest rates of suicides (suicides per 100,000) occurred among men aged 75 and up and among women aged 45 to 54. Suicide was the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10 to 34 and for those aged 34 to 54.

Suicidal thoughts are also a significant concern. Having serious thoughts of suicide increases the risk of a person making an actual suicide attempt. There are more than 25 attempted suicides for each suicide death. In addition, 12 million adults aged 18 or older have serious thoughts of suicide. Among high school students, more than 17% (approximately 2.5 million ninth through twelfth graders) have seriously considered suicide, more than 13% have made a suicide plan, and more than 8% have attempted suicide.

Alcohol and drug abuse are second only to depression and other mood disorders as the most frequent risk factors for suicide. Suicide touches all ages, backgrounds, and racial and ethnic groups in all parts of the country. However, some populations are at higher risk for suicidal behavior. For example, the emotional toll of a person's suicide can put surviving family, friends, and other loved ones at greater risk of dying by suicide.

Fortunately, there is strong evidence that mental health treatment can effectively reduce the risk of suicide. However, before treatment can be effective, the warning signs of suicide must be recognized.

If you are someone you know is thinking about suicide, call the national suicide prevention hotline at 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255). If you are in an immediate medical crisis, please call 911.

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Find more information at www.1in5.info