

Preventing Youth Suicide

Suicide is not a topic most people want to discuss. The sad fact is that suicide is common among youth. It is the third most common cause of death among youth ages 10 to 24. Nearly 4,600 lives are lost each year.

Deaths are only part of the problem. More young people survive suicide attempts. Each year, nearly 157,000 youth need medical care for injuries.

Suicide affects all youth. Some groups are at higher risk. Boys are more likely than girls to die. Girls are more likely to report attempting suicide.

What are the risk factors?

Some factors put a young person at risk. 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 risk factors but do not attempt suicide

What are the warning signs?

A youth at risk of suicide may:

- Talk about wanting to die
- Feel alone or hopeless
- Feel trapped or in pain
- Give away possessions
- Sleep too little or too much
- Increase the use of alcohol or drugs
- Withdraw from others
- Show rage or anger
- Have extreme mood swings

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

What can I do for someone I care about?

Get help right away. 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. All calls are confidential.

Be sure to:

- Show interest and support. Do not judge.
- Do not leave the person alone.

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/vetoviolen
- 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.