

Suicide: Facts and Warning Signs

Did you know?

- Every 18 minutes, someone in the United States dies by suicide; it is estimated that an attempt is made about once a minute.
- 656 people died by suicide in Wisconsin in 2004.
- In Wisconsin, suicide is the *second* most common cause of death among people age 15-34. It is *third* nationally.
- People age 65 and older have a higher percentage of suicides than any other age group.
- Men complete suicide four times more often than women; however, at least twice as many women attempt suicide.
- The suicide rate for young black males (15-24) has risen by 66 percent over the past fifteen years.

Why do people commit suicide?

A suicide attempt is a clear indication that something is gravely wrong in a person's life. Most people who commit suicide have an underlying mental or emotional disorder. The most common cause of suicide is untreated depression. It has been reported that 90% of all suicides occur at the peak of a depressive episode. Depressive illnesses can distort thinking, so people can't reason clearly or rationally. They may not know they have a treatable illness or they may think they can't be helped.

Risk Factors and Warning Signs

- Talking about suicide, death, and/or no reason to live
- Expressions of hopelessness, worthlessness and helplessness
- Previous suicide attempts
- Abrupt personality changes
- Excessive risk-taking behavior
- Depression
- Giving away prized possessions or setting one's affairs in order
- Lack of interest in the future
- Preoccupation with death
- Withdrawal from family, friends or social supports

What You Need to Know...



Know What to Do

- Know the warning signs of depression and suicide.
- Always take thoughts or plans of suicide seriously.
- Ask the person if they are thinking about suicide. Asking will not plant the idea in someone's head.
- Ask the person if they have a suicide plan, a weapon or some type of dangerous object.
- If the person is in immediate danger, they must see a doctor or psychiatrist immediately. Call 911 or take the person to the nearest hospital emergency room.
- Never keep a person's plan for suicide a secret.
- Do not minimize the person's problems. Be non-judgmental. Show interest, support and undivided attention. He or she is not just seeking attention.
- If the person is not in immediate danger, show empathy and do your best to help him or her find a doctor or a mental health professional.

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, call

- Milwaukee County Mental Health Crisis Line (414) 257-7222
- 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) or 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
- 911

For more information, contact MHA at (414) 276-3122 or visit our web site at www.mhawisconsin.org.

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