

Shatter the SILENCE

Suicide Prevention in Older Adults

When you think of suicide, you may not think of your mother who spent years raising you... or your spouse who you've spent the last 50 years of your life with.

However, every day in the United States, 17 adults over the age of 65 commit suicide – the highest suicide rate of any demographic group.

**IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS
THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE, CONTACT THE
NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
1.800.273.TALK.**

It is a myth that depression is part of the aging process. It is not normal for people of any age to suffer from depression; this includes our older adult population.

Common warning signs of depression to watch for:

- Loss of interest in things or activities that are usually found enjoyable
- Cutting back on social interaction, self-care, and grooming
- Breaking medical regimens (such as special diets, prescriptions)
- Irritability, mood swings, or constant complaining; nothing seems to make the person happy
- Talk of worthlessness, not being needed anymore; excessive or unwarranted guilt

Common risk factors surrounding suicide in older adults:

- The recent death of a spouse, family member or friend
- Illness or the fear of a prolonged illness
- Major life changes (i.e. divorce, retirement)
- Social isolation and feelings of loneliness

Common suicide warning signs in an older adult include (but are not limited to):

- Insomnia, weight loss, dramatic changes in regular routines
- Increased prescription drug use or stockpiling medications
- Elaborate good-byes or social withdrawal
- Rush to complete or revise will
- Sudden elevated mood/relief prior to a suicidal attempt
- Feelings of being a burden
- Giving away prized possessions

What to do:

Depression is treatable and suicide can be prevented!

Stigma associated with depressive illnesses can prevent people from getting help. Your willingness to talk about depression and suicide with your family members can be the first step in getting help and preventing suicide.

Begin a dialogue (talking) by asking questions in a non-judgmental way.

This can often be the push a person needs to get help.

- Do you ever feel so badly that you think of suicide/harming yourself?
- Do you have a plan? Do you have access to what you would use?
- Do you think about when you would?

1.800.273.TALK

Always take thoughts or plans seriously.

Don't try to minimize problems or shame a person into changing their mind.

Get treatment/help.

See a family physician, mental health specialist, go to a hospital emergency room, or for an immediate need call 911.

Follow through.

Help find a doctor/mental health professional or participate in making the first phone call, be available for doctor appointments, and offering emotional support.

Remove any items that could be used to inflict harm to self.

