



COSS

Suicide is not often talked about or thought of as a leading cause of death. This may be due to the stigma, pain, and shame that often surround suicide.

SUICIDE PREVENTION: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Many are surprised to hear that suicide is the second leading cause of death among Canadians 15 to 34 years of age, and the third leading cause of death among Canadians 35 to 44 years of age (Statistics Canada, 2006). Each year, roughly 3700 Canadians die by suicide (Health Canada, 2009). That's more than the number of Canadians who die in motor vehicle crashes each year (Transport Canada, 2007).

Suicide is complex and there is no single cause. Many factors place individuals at risk of committing suicide. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- Mental illness (e.g., major depression)
- History of abuse, trauma, or a family history of suicide
- Previous suicide attempts
- Existing physical condition (e.g., chronic pain)
- Financial problems (e.g., job loss, being in uncontrollable debt)
- Relationship break-ups
- Sexual identity issues
- Alcohol or drug misuse

The following groups have been identified as having an increased risk of suicide:



Youth (15 to 30 years)

Individuals thinking about suicide are in a great deal of emotional pain. They often feel hopeless, helpless, and that life is unbearable. For some, death seems like the only way to escape their pain.



Older adults (over 65 years)



Males



Aboriginals

(McLean et al., 2008)



HEALTHY
MINDS MATTER

CHRYSLER

CAW TCA
CANADA

W+T+W
WORKING TOWARD WELLNESS
AT CHRYSLER CANADA

WARNING SIGNS

There are often warning signs BEFORE a person commits suicide. Some signs include:

- Always expressing feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, anxiety, or anger.
- Showing signs of depression, such as a loss of appetite, energy, and interest in favourite activities.
- Withdrawing from family and friends.
- Drinking and using drugs more often.
- Talking about wanting to die.
- Talking about having a plan to kill themselves (e.g., taking pills).
- Giving away valued belongings, and getting personal affairs in order.
- Taking risks, such as reckless driving or injuring oneself on purpose.

(Canadian Mental Health Association, 2010).



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you know someone who is THINKING about suicide, offer help by:

- Listening carefully, staying calm, and not judging the person. It's important for the person to share his or her feelings.
- Asking the person if he or she is thinking about suicide. A person thinking about suicide will often talk about it if asked.
- Asking the person if he or she has a plan and a means to carry it out. If yes, don't leave him or her alone and get help right away.
- Taking all threats of suicide seriously, and not promising to keep it a secret. Tell someone who can help.
- Helping the person identify and contact sources of help, such as a counsellor or a local crisis or distress centre. Check your local phone book for a list of local crisis or distress centres. Call 911 if you need help right away.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW...

It's important to know that you can't take away another person's pain or solve his or her problems. People make their own decisions. What you can do is listen to, and care about, the person going through this hard time. Take action if you feel the threat of suicide is real.

For more information on the warning signs of suicide or how to help someone thinking about suicide, contact a local crisis or distress centre. The phone number is usually located in the first few pages of the telephone book. You can also get contact information by visiting the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention at: www.casp-acps.ca/crisiscentres.asp

Key References:

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www.workingtowardwellness.ca

