

Did You Know?

Global Facts

The World Health Organization estimates that over 800,000 people die by suicide each year — that's one person every 40 seconds¹.

Suicide accounted for 1.4% of all deaths worldwide, making it the 15th leading cause of death in 2012. Effective and evidence-based interventions can be implemented at population, sub-population and individual levels to prevent suicide and suicide attempts.

No single determinant, including mental illness, is enough on its own to cause a suicide. Rather, suicide typically results from the interaction of many factors, for example: mental illness, marital breakdown, financial hardship, deteriorating physical health, a major loss, or a lack of social support².

Times of Crisis

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, cannot make the thoughts go away, feel like acting on the thoughts, have a plan for how to die by suicide, or have access to the means with which to end life, you need to get help immediately! Call 911, go to the nearest hospital emergency room or urgent care clinic, or call a crisis line or distress centre.

Suicide in Canada

Suicide rate in males is three times higher than in females³.

One of the highest rates of suicide in Canada can be found in males over the age of 80. 10 seniors over the age of 60 commit suicide every week in Canada⁴.

Known risk factors for suicide include: previous suicide attempt, family history of suicidal behaviour, a serious physical or mental illness (such as operational stress injuries).

One of the main causes of suicide in the aging population is isolation. As people grow older, they have more and more taken away from them (i.e. their jobs, families, homes) and for some, suicide may seem like the only option⁵.

There are approximately 4000 deaths by suicide in Canada each year⁴ at a considerable cost to government. In 2010, it is estimated that there were 105 deaths (11.1/100,000) due to suicide/self-harm in Nova Scotia at a cost of approximately \$74 million dollars⁶. It is noteworthy that these are estimates of deaths by suicide and that the actual number is likely higher due to reporting issues.



What You Can Do

Warning signs of suicide in seniors include: ideation of death, substance abuse, purposelessness, anxiety, hopelessness, withdrawal, anger, recklessness, mood changes⁷.

There is many things you can do to help a senior who is suicidal, such as suggest a change in routine, provide options for counselling and therapy, and optimizing family time. You can help by letting them know that they are not alone⁸.

If the situation isn't urgent but you or the person you are concerned about is distressed, help is available. Helping to make calls and appointments can be very important to getting someone help in a timely manner.

What You Can Do for You!

Think about your emotional well-being. Assess your emotional health regularly. Consider the particular demands or stresses you are facing and how they are affecting you. Give yourself permission to take a break from your worries and concerns. Recognize that dedicating even a short time every day to your mental fitness will reap significant benefits in terms of feeling rejuvenated and more confident⁹.

1. "Suicide Data". 2016. World Health Organization. http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/.
2. Suicide In Canada. 1994. [Ottawa]: Health Canada.
3. "Suicide Rates: An Overview". 2016. *Statcan.Gc.Ca*. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-624-x/2012001/article/11696-eng.htm>.
4. "Suicide Among Seniors A Real But Overlooked Problem". 2016. *Ctvnews.Ca*. <http://www.ctvnews.ca/suicide-among-seniors-a-real-but-overlooked-problem-1.707900>.
5. "Suicide Risk In The Aging Population". 2016. *Suicide Prevention*. <http://suicideprevention.ca/suicide-risk-in-the-aging-population/>.
6. "The Cost Of Injury In Canada". 2015. http://www.parachutecanada.org/downloads/research/Cost_of_Injury-2015.pdf.
7. "Seniors And Depression: Suicide Information". 2016. *Heretohelp.Bc.Ca*. <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/seniors-and-depression-suicide-information>.
8. "Suicide Risk In The Aging Population". 2016. *Suicide Prevention*. <http://suicideprevention.ca/suicide-risk-in-the-aging-population/>.
9. "Mental Fitness Tips - Canadian Mental Health Association". 2016. *Canadian Mental Health Association*. http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/mental-fitness-tips/#.V6TJX9ArKi4.