

# Suicide

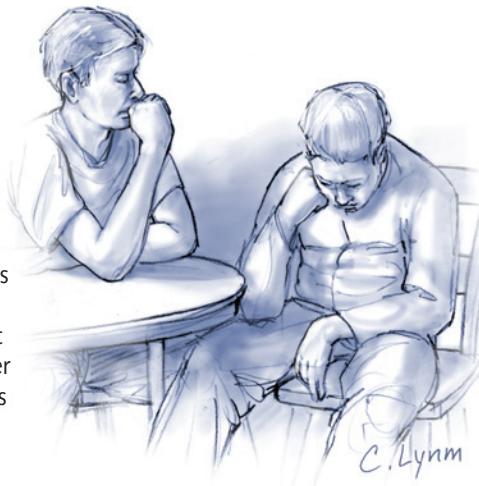
**Suicide** (self-inflicted death) occurs in all parts of the world. Suicide causes about half of all deaths due to violence. Approximately 1 million persons die each year worldwide from suicide. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among persons aged 15 to 24 years in the United States, following unintentional injuries and homicide. Suicide is often preventable. Warning signs are often present, and individuals who talk about killing themselves must be taken seriously. Mental illness is present in most persons who die by suicide. Treating these mental illnesses can help to decrease the number of deaths by suicide. Suicide affects not only the person who dies but also his or her entire social structure—family, friends, and acquaintances. The May 25, 2005, issue of *JAMA* includes a report of surveys about suicidal thoughts and behaviors in persons living in the United States.

## RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE

- Depression (especially feeling hopeless)
- **Bipolar illness** (episodes of depression and abnormally elevated moods)
- **Schizophrenia** (a severe mental disorder with disturbances of thinking, mood, and behavior)
- Alcohol and other drug abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Previous suicide attempts
- Childhood abuse
- Chronic physical illness

## RESPONDING TO SOMEONE CONSIDERING SUICIDE

Any person who talks about killing themselves needs help. Listening to the individual in a nonjudgmental manner and providing emotional support are important ways to help persons who are considering suicide. Enlisting the help of a doctor or a mental health professional is essential. Suicide prevention telephone lines and crisis centers have resources for friends and family, and for the person who has signs of suicidal behavior. Removing access to firearms may be important to protect the person thinking of suicide, and other persons as well. Assist anyone who talks about dying and having no reason to live to seek help immediately.



## SEEKING HELP

Talking to someone trained to listen to persons considering suicide can help. Your doctor or mental health professionals in your community can provide assistance and resources for you if you are thinking of suicide or if anyone you know is considering suicide. For immediate help in the United States, call the **life line (800/273-8255)**. Outside the United States, access your local emergency service.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Strategy for Suicide Prevention  
**Life line: 800/273-8255**  
[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/suicideprevention](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/suicideprevention)
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
888/333-2377  
[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- International Association for Suicide Prevention  
[www.med.uio.no/iasp/](http://www.med.uio.no/iasp/)
- National Institute of Mental Health  
301/443-4513  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

## INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and previous *JAMA* Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page link on *JAMA*'s Web site at [www.jama.com](http://www.jama.com). A Patient Page on suicide in older persons was published in the March 3, 2004, issue; one on adolescent suicide was published in the December 26, 2001, issue; and one on depression was published in the June 18, 2003, issue.

Sources: American Association of Suicidology, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, International Association for Suicide Prevention, National Institute of Mental Health, National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, World Health Organization

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