

Facts about Suicide

- Worldwide there are more deaths due to suicide than to accidents, homicides and war combined.
- About 30,000 people in the United States die by suicide every year.
- Currently, suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the U.S.
- Every day, approximately 80 Americans take their own life, and 1,500 more attempt to do so.
- A person dies by suicide about every 18 minutes in the U.S. An attempt is estimated to be made once every minute.
- In the U.S. in 2001, the suicide rate among women was 4.1 per 100,000, while for men it was 17.6 per 100,000.
- There are more than four male suicides for every female suicide, but twice as many females as males attempt suicide.
- Firearms are the most frequent method of suicide among adults in the United States.
- Over ninety percent of people who die by suicide had at least one psychiatric illness at the time of death. The most common diagnoses are depression and drug and/or alcohol abuse.
- Alcoholism is a factor in about 30 percent of all suicide deaths.
- Early recognition and treatment of depression and other psychiatric illnesses appears to be the best way to prevent suicide.
- Certain personality disorders, such as borderline and antisocial personality disorders, appear to carry high risk for suicide. Impulsivity also appears to be a risk factor for suicide.
- Between 20 and 50 percent of people who kill themselves had previously attempted suicide. Although the majority of people who die by suicide have not made a previous attempt, a serious suicide attempt is a clear risk factor for suicide death.
- Suicidal individuals often talk about suicide directly or indirectly using statements like, "My family would be better off with out me." Sometimes they talk as if they are saying goodbye or going away, and may arrange to put their affairs in order. Other signs of contemplating suicide include giving away articles they value, paying off debts or changing a will.

Facts about Youth Suicide

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students and the third leading cause of death among all youth 15–24 years old. In the U.S., only accidents and homicides claim more young lives.
- Nearly 4,000 people aged 15–24 die by suicide each year in the United States.
- Between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s, the suicide rate among U.S. males aged 15–24 more than tripled (from 6.3 per 100,000 in 1955 to 21.3 in 1977). Among females aged 15–24, the rate more than doubled during this period (from 2.0 to 5.2). The youth suicide rate generally leveled off during the 1980s and early 1990s and since the mid-1990s, it has been steadily decreasing.
- Among young people aged 15–24, males die by suicide almost six times more frequently than females. In 2001 (the latest year for which national rates are available) the suicide rate among young men was 16.5 per 100,000, and the rate among young women was 2.9.
- Youth suicide rates vary widely among different racial and ethnic groups. In 2001, white youth had a suicide rate of 11.5 per 100,000, compared to rates of 7.3 for African Americans, 6.1 for Hispanics youth, 6.4 for Asian Americans and 18.8 for American Indians and Alaskan Natives.
- Twenty percent of American high school students report having seriously considered suicide during the previous 12 months. Eight percent of high school students make a suicide attempt.
- Seventy percent of youth who make a suicide attempt are frequent users of alcohol and/or other drugs. In states where the minimum drinking age was raised from 18 to 21, the suicide rate for 18-to-20 year olds decreased.
- Over 90 percent of youth who die by suicide had at least one psychiatric illness at the time of death; in about half such cases, the psychiatric illness was present, although often unrecognized, for two years or more. The most common diagnoses among youth are depression, substance abuse and conduct disorders.

Facts about Depression

- Depression affects more than 19 million American adults aged 18 and over each year, representing nearly 10 percent of American adults.
- More American adults suffer from depression than coronary heart disease (7 million), cancer (6 million) and AIDS (200,000) combined.
- About 15 percent of the population develops clinical depression at some time in their life. Depression will affect one in 10 men and one in four women.
- Symptoms of depression include:
 - sadness or “down” mood
 - loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
 - poor appetite or overeating
 - trouble falling or staying asleep or sleeping too much
 - feeling tired or having little energy
 - feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach or guilt
 - trouble concentrating
 - moving or speaking very slowly, or the opposite, being fidgety or restless
 - thoughts of being better off dead or of hurting oneself in some way.
- Depression is among the most treatable of psychiatric illnesses. Current treatment includes medication, psychotherapy or some combination of the two.
- Fewer than half of all Americans consider depression to be a health problem and more than two in five believe it is a sign of personal weakness.
- Over 60 percent of people who die by suicide are estimated to suffer from major depression, with no other psychiatric or physical illness. Thirty percent have alcoholism, and half of those with alcoholism have depression as well.
- Certain intense emotional or affective states may suggest a suicide crisis in individuals who suffer from depression. These include intense desperation, hopelessness, rage, abandonment, self-hatred or anxiety.
- Almost two million Americans currently suffer from bipolar disorder (manic-depressive illness), in which episodes of depression alternate or co-exist with periods of mania. This mood disorder carries a high risk of suicide.
- Approximately 20 percent of all patients with bipolar disorder have their first episode during adolescence.