

# Suicide: Help is Available

## Did You Know?

- Suicide is preventable!
- The first step is to recognize thoughts of suicide
- Treatment is readily available
- Embarrassment is common but shouldn't stand in the way of talking with your physician, family, and friends
- There are early warning signs of suicide (See Common Warning Signs, below)
- Friends and family can help get loved ones into medical treatment
- Alcohol and drugs make things worse
- 1-800-SUICIDE is a hotline that provides help for dealing with suicidal feelings, family members, and friends.

## Facts to Know About Suicide

- Over 90 percent of suicides are associated with a mental disorder
- The strongest risk factors for suicide are depression, alcohol abuse, cocaine use, and separation or divorce
- The suicide rate is highest among adults 65 or older, and especially Caucasian males
- The suicide rate among persons under 25 years of age has increased dramatically

## Common Warning Signs

- Withdrawal and isolation from family and friends
- Obtaining a weapon when depressed
- Giving away of prized possessions
- Often talking about death
- Hoarding medications
- Making statements such as "There's nothing left to live for."

## Common Causes for Feeling Suicidal

The leading cause for feeling suicidal is clinical depression. Another may be any situation that leads a person to feel hopeless. Examples of this can be when a person suffers significant losses or disappointment and sees no hope for improvement.

Studies have demonstrated that individuals diagnosed with the following are at the highest risk for suicide:

- Depression
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Schizophrenia
- Borderline personality disorder

## Available Treatment Methods

When clinical depression is diagnosed, the following treatments can help:

- *Psychotherapy* can be used to help a person with clinical depression. Research has shown that two kinds of psychotherapy – interpersonal and cognitive-behavioral therapy – work well in treating depression.

- *Antidepressant medications* are often used to treat clinical depression. Sometimes medication is combined with psychotherapy. Many people use both services.
- *Electro-Convulsive Therapy (ECT)* is another effective treatment for certain people with depression. It is most often used in very severe depression with people who have a previous history of good results from ECT, complications or lack of results from medications, or the need for immediate relief. In this safe procedure, a seizure is induced under anesthesia. Six to eight treatments often relieve the person's depressed mood.

Hospitalization is usually necessary when the severity and imminence of suicidal risk are high. This situation is an emergency which requires safe and quick containment and intensive treatment.

## What Should I Do If I Think I'm Suicidal?

1. Get Help Immediately!
  - Call the toll free number on your insurance card for help in choosing a health care provider.
  - If it's an emergency, get help from family or friends.
  - Call 911 if no family or friends are available.
2. Talk with a healthcare provider - Arrange an exam with a primary care physician or a mental health professional.
3. Get rid of any weapons
4. Remain actively involved in your treatment - Tell your provider about any changes in your mood. Share any concerns about your care. Immediately tell your provider about thoughts of hurting yourself.
5. Learn more about suicide - Your doctor or your local mental health association can suggest reading materials on depression or suicide. They can also advise you of local support groups. Information about suicide can also be found on the Internet at:
  - American Association of Suicidology ([www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org))
  - Centers For Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov/safeusa/suicide.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/safeusa/suicide.htm))
  - Depression Central ([www.psycom.net](http://www.psycom.net))
  - National Alliance for the Mentally Ill ([www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org))
  - National Mental Health Association ([www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org))

## What Should I Do If Someone Else is Suicidal?

- Be a good listener. Let the person know you are available and concerned.
- Familiarize yourself with suicide intervention resources such as mental health centers and hotline phone numbers. Information is often found on the front of the local yellow pages.
- Encourage your family member or friend to get treatment and to stay in treatment.
- Get rid of all weapons.

## Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at [www.EAP4YOU.com](http://www.EAP4YOU.com). Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you at 1-800-EAP-4YOU or 1-800-327-4968.

**Make the Call!**

USPS Employee Assistance Program  
**1-800-327-4968**  
 (1-800-EAP-4-YOU) TTY: 1-877-492-7341  
[www.EAP4YOU.com](http://www.EAP4YOU.com)