Suicide is when people direct violence at themselves with the intent to end their lives, and they die as a result of their actions. Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States.

A suicide attempt is when people harm themselves with the intent to end their lives, but they do not die as a result of their actions. Many more people survive suicide attempts than die, but they often have serious injuries. However, a suicide attempt does not always result in a physical injury.

To learn more about suicide and other self-directed violence, please visit: http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/suicide.html

**Why is suicide a public health problem?**

Suicide is a significant problem in the United States:

- 41,149 people killed themselves in 2013.¹
- Over 494,169 people with self-inflicted injuries were treated in U.S. emergency departments in 2013.¹
- Suicides result in an estimated $44.6 billion in combined medical and work loss costs.¹

These numbers underestimate this problem. Many people who have suicidal thoughts or make suicide attempts never seek services.²

**How does suicide affect health?**

Suicide, by definition, is fatal and is a problem throughout the life span. In 2013, suicide was the second leading cause of death among persons aged 15-24 years, the second among persons aged 25-34 years, the fourth among person aged 35-54 years, the eighth among persons aged 55-64 years, the seventeenth among persons 65 years and older, and the tenth leading cause of death across all ages.¹

People who attempt suicide and survive may experience serious injuries, such as broken bones, brain damage, or organ failure. These injuries may have long-term effects on their health. People who survive suicide attempts may also have depression and other mental health problems.

Suicide also affects the health of others and the community. When people die by suicide, their family and friends often experience shock, anger, guilt, and depression. The medical costs and lost wages associated with suicide also take their toll on the community.

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¹Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
²Data from the National Institute of Mental Health
³Data from the National Alliance on Mental Illness
⁴Data from the American Psychological Association
Suicide is a significant public health problem, and there is a lot to learn about how to prevent it. One strategy is to learn about the warning signs of suicide, which can include individuals talking about wanting to hurt themselves, increasing substance use, and having changes in their mood, diet, or sleeping patterns. When these warning signs appear, quickly connecting the person to supportive services is critical. Promoting opportunities and settings that strengthen connections among people, families, and communities is another suicide prevention goal.


If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention

CDC Facebook Page on Violence Prevention
www.facebook.com/vetoviolence

National Institute for Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.sprc.org

Preventing Suicide: A Global Imperative

CDC uses a four-step approach to address public health problems like suicide.

Step 1: Define the problem
Before we can prevent suicide, we need to know how big the problem is, where it occurs, and who it affects. CDC learns about a problem by gathering and studying data. These data are critical because they help us know where prevention is most needed.

Step 2: Identify risk and protective factors
It is not enough to know that suicide affects certain people in certain areas. We also need to know why. CDC conducts and supports research to answer this question. We can then develop programs to reduce or get rid of risk factors and to increase protective factors.

Step 3: Develop and test prevention strategies
Using information gathered in research, CDC develops and evaluates strategies to prevent suicide.

Step 4: Ensure widespread adoption
In this final step, CDC shares the best prevention strategies. CDC may also provide funding or technical help so communities can adopt these strategies.

For more information on suicide prevention activities at CDC, please visit http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide.