

Facts about Veteran Suicide

- **30,000-32,000 US deaths from suicide/ year**
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- **About 20% are Veterans**
 - National Violent Death Reporting System
- **About 18 deaths from suicide per day are Veterans**
 - National Violent Death Reporting System
- **About 5 deaths from suicide per day among Veterans receiving care in VHA** – VA Serious Mental Illness Treatment, Research and Evaluation Center
- **Veterans are more likely to use firearms as a means for suicide**
 - National Violent Death Reporting System
- **About 950 attempts/month among Veterans receiving care in VHA as reported by VA Suicide Prevention Program Staff**
- **About 33% of recent Veteran suicides have a history of previous attempts**- VA National Suicide Prevention Staff reports
- **Preliminary data since 2006 show decreased suicide rates in Veterans aged 18-29 who use VA health care relative to Veterans in the same age group who do not. This decrease in rates translates to about 250 lives per year.** – National Violent Death Reporting System and VA Serious Mental Illness Treatment, Resource and Evaluation Center.

Veteran Specific Risks



- Multiple deployments
- **Length of deployments**
- Deployments to hostile environments
- **Exposure to extreme stress/death/combat**
- Physical/sexual assault while in the service (not limited to women)
- **Service related injuries (TBI, PTSD, other medical and mental health diagnoses)**
- Familiarity with weapons

Protective Factors

- Positive social support
- History of adaptive coping skills
- Participating in treatment
- Veteran acknowledges hopefulness
- Religious beliefs that act as a barrier
- Life satisfaction (e.g., rating 1 to 10)
- Fear of suicide or death
- Family or friends that act as barrier to self-harm

(Rudd, 2006)

Suicide is Preventable

Become a partner in Suicide Prevention

Ask Directly about Suicide

- **Suicidal ideation**
- **Suicide plans**
- **Access to Means**
- **Suicidal ideation and behavior is often a “process” and habituation occurs to thoughts of death and the act of self –harm.**
- **Talking about suicide does not cause a person to be suicidal. Asking shows compassion, reduces isolation and stigma.**



VA Programs and Services

- OEF/OIF COMBAT CARE STAFF
- MH (PTSD, Substance Abuse, Military Sexual Trauma, Mental Health Intensive Case Mgmt, Homeless, etc.)
- TBI/Polytrauma, SCI
- Pain Education Group
- Spiritual Support
- Veteran Readjustment Counseling Centers

How to Spot the Warning Signs of Suicide

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Surprise at a family member's suicide is not uncommon. The [warning signs of suicide](#) can be difficult for family and friends to spot, even in someone with a history of depression or other mental health problems.

Suicide and suicidal thinking is more widespread than you might think. According to the results of a government survey released in September 2009, roughly 8.3 million adults—or about 3.7% of the population age 18 and older—had “serious thoughts of suicide” in 2008.

How can you identify suicidal thinking in a loved one before it's too late? There is no foolproof checklist to follow, but there are some telltale signs that should spur you to intervene and seek the help of a mental health professional.

A diagnosis of depression or bipolar disorder

The symptoms of mental health conditions such as [depression](#) and [bipolar disorder](#) are the main factors that drive people to consider harming themselves. Depression is a chronic condition and it tends to recur, especially if it's not treated or is only partially treated. Sometimes the people who live with a depressed person are better at spotting the signs of a relapse sooner than the person himself. Increasing isolation is often a symptom of depression, as is sadness, expressions of worthlessness, and sleeping or eating too much or too little.

“Depression is the leading illness for suicide, so the deeper the depression gets or the longer it goes on, the more discouraged the person experiencing it feels,” says Paula Clayton, MD, the medical director of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. “If you have a brief depression, say three or four months, and then get over it, I doubt you're as vulnerable as someone who has depression that lasts one or two years and despite all [treatments](#) doesn't get better.”

In people with [bipolar disorder](#)—a condition in which bouts of depression are interspersed with periods of [mania](#)—suicide most often occurs while the person is depressed rather than manic.

Caring for a depressed person

- [10 Things to Say \(and 10 Not to Say\) to Someone With Depression](#)
- [16 Ways to Support Someone With Depression](#)
- [The Best Websites for Those Caring for a Depressed Friend or Family Member](#)

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