

# Risk Factors

Suicide does not discriminate. People of all genders, ages, and ethnicities can be at risk. Suicidal behavior is complex and there is no single cause. In fact, many different factors contribute to someone making a suicide attempt. But people most at risk tend to share certain characteristics. The main risk factors for suicide are:

- Depression, other mental disorders, or substance abuse disorder
- Certain medical conditions
- Chronic pain
- A prior suicide attempt
- Family history of a mental disorder or substance abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Having guns or other firearms in the home
- Having recently been released from prison or jail
- Being exposed to others' suicidal behavior, such as that of family members, peers, or celebrities

Many people have some of these risk factors but do not attempt suicide. It is important to note that suicide is not a normal response to stress. **Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress, not a harmless bid for attention, and should not be ignored.**

Often, family and friends are the first to recognize the warning signs of suicide and can be the first step toward helping an at-risk individual find treatment with someone who specializes in diagnosing and treating mental health conditions. See the resources on our ["Find Help for Mental Illnesses"](#) page if you're not sure where to start.

## Do gender and age affect suicide risk?

Men are more likely to die by suicide than women, but women are more likely to *attempt* suicide. Men are more likely to use deadlier methods, such as firearms or suffocation. Women are more likely than men to attempt suicide by poisoning. The most [recent figures released by the CDC](#) show that the highest rate of suicide deaths among women is found between ages 45 and 64, while the highest rate for men occurs at ages 75+. Children and young adults also are at risk for suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 34.

## What about different racial/ethnic groups?

[The CDC reports](#) that among racial and ethnic groups, American Indians and Alaska Natives tend to have the highest rate of suicides, followed by non-Hispanic Whites. African Americans tend to have the lowest suicide rate, while Hispanics tend to have the second lowest rate.