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## Injury Prevention & Control : Division of Violence Prevention

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### Suicide Prevention

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#### Youth Suicide

Suicide (i.e., taking one's own life) is a serious public health problem that affects even young people. For youth between the ages of 10 and 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death. It results in approximately 4600 lives lost each year. The top three methods used in suicides of young people include firearm (45%), suffocation (40%), and poisoning (8%).

Deaths from youth suicide are only part of the problem. More young people survive suicide attempts than actually die. A nationwide survey of youth in grades 9–12 in public and private schools in the United States (U.S.) found that 16% of students reported seriously considering suicide, 13% reported creating a plan, and 8% reporting trying to take their own life in the 12 months preceding the survey. Each year, approximately 157,000 youth between the ages of 10 and 24 receive medical care for self-inflicted injuries at Emergency Departments across the U.S.

Suicide affects all youth, but some groups are at higher risk than others. Boys are more likely than girls to die from suicide. Of the reported suicides in the 10 to 24 age group, 81% of the deaths were males and 19% were females. Girls, however, are more likely to report attempting suicide than boys. Cultural variations in suicide rates also exist, with Native American/Alaskan Native youth having the highest rates of suicide-related fatalities. A nationwide survey of youth in grades 9–12 in public and private schools in the U.S. found Hispanic youth were more likely to report attempting suicide than their black and white, non-Hispanic peers.

Several factors can put a young person at risk for suicide. However, having these risk factors does not always mean that suicide will occur.

#### Risk factors:

- History of previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- History of depression or other mental illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Stressful life event or loss

#### Sidebar Notes:

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-

- Easy access to lethal methods
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others
- Incarceration

Most people are uncomfortable with the topic of suicide. Too often, victims are blamed, and their families and friends are left stigmatized. As a result, people do not communicate openly about suicide. Thus an important public health problem is left shrouded in secrecy, which limits the amount of information available to those working to prevent suicide.

The good news is that research over the last several decades has uncovered a wealth of information on the causes of suicide and on prevention strategies. Additionally, CDC is working to monitor the problem and develop programs to prevent youth suicide.

273-TALK (1-800-273-8255),  
or visit the Web  
(<http://www.suicidepreventionlif>

Suicide has many warning signs.  
For more information, visit the  
American Association of  
Suicidology's Web site  
([http://www.suicidology.org/web](http://www.suicidology.org/web-and-tools/warning-signs)  
-and-tools/warning-signs).