



## OVERVIEW

### BIG IDEA

Suicide and suicidal thinking are major mental and physical health concerns for adolescents and young adults.

### OBJECTIVE

**7.7:** Recognize risk factors and warning signs for suicide.

### AGENDA

1. Suicide Among High Schoolers
2. The Impact of Suicide
3. Youth Suicide
4. Understanding Suicide
5. Antidepressants and Suicide

### HOMEWORK

Research warning signs for suicide using credible sources on the Internet.

# LESSON 7.7

## Suicide

### SUMMARY:

Students will learn about the challenging topic of suicide in this lesson, uncovering risk factors and warning signs that will help them better understand the problem. First students will examine data showing suicides, planning, and consideration among high schoolers. Then they will read statistics about the prevalence of suicide attempts and discuss the impact. Next, students will read about youth suicide. Finally, they will research the connection between antidepressants and suicidal thinking among young adults.

### STANDARDS:

**NHES 3.12.4:** Determine when professional health services may be required.



# Suicide

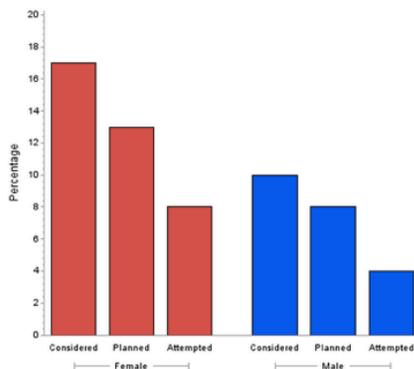
Obj. 7.7: Recognize the risk factors and warning signs for suicide.



## Suicide Among High School Students

Analyze the graph and use it to answer the questions that follow.

Percentage\* of U.S. High School Students Reporting Considering, Planning, or Attempting Suicide in the Past 12 Months, by Sex, United States, 2009



Source: CDC, Youth Risk Behavior Survey ([http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/statistics/youth\\_risk.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/statistics/youth_risk.html))

1. Which gender considers, plans, and attempts suicides more often? Why do you think this trend may be occurring?
2. What percentage of males and females have considered suicide, respectively?
3. Considering the extent of the high school population who have considered, planned, or attempted suicide, what do you think should be done about the problem?



## The Impact of Suicide

According to studies, the prevalence of suicidal thoughts, suicide planning, and suicide attempts is significantly higher among young adults aged 18-29 years than among adults aged ≥30 years. Additionally, among young adults ages 15 to 24 years old, there are approximately 100-200 attempts for every completed suicide. **What impact do all of these suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts have? Consider the individual, relationship, school, and community level of the social-ecological model.**

Source: CDC Suicide Statistics ([http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Suicide\\_DataSheet-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Suicide_DataSheet-a.pdf))

**DO NOW:** According to the data (CDC), “Among high school students in the United States, females were more likely to report having considered, planned, and attempted suicide compared to males (considered suicide: 17.4% versus 10.5%, planned suicide: 13.2% versus 8.6%, and attempted suicide: 8.1% versus 4.6%, respectively) in 2009

**DO NOW: Answers:**

1. Females
2. 17% (females); 11% (males)
3. Answers will vary

**DISCUSS:** More statistics can be found at “Suicide: Facts at a Glance) at [http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Suicide\\_DataSheet-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Suicide_DataSheet-a.pdf)



### 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
- 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.

Source: CDC, Youth Suicide ([http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/youth\\_suicide.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/youth_suicide.html))

**NEW INFO:** Ask students why they think the gender and cultural variations exist.

**NEW INFO:** Emphasize that these factors only increase likelihood (review the definition of risk factor). They operate on a population-level, not individual level. If someone experiences one or more of these risk factors they are statistically more likely to be in the group that considers, plans, or commits suicide BUT this does not mean that having these individual risk factors will CAUSE a person to consider or attempt suicide.



**Understanding Suicide**

Read the handout entitled, "Understanding Suicide" and use it to fill in the table below.

What is <i>SUICIDE</i> ?	
What is a <i>SUICIDE ATTEMPT</i> ?	
Why is suicide a public health problem?	
How does suicide affect health?	
Who is at risk for suicide?	
How can we prevent suicide?	



**Antidepressants and Suicide**

Research the connection between antidepressant use among teens and young adults and suicidal thoughts. Find one or more credible source(s) about this connection. On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions from the information you gather:

- Source citation (title, author, source, date, website)
- What connection between antidepressant use and suicide does the article make?
- Why do scientists believe this connection exists?
- What are the recommendations for young people who may need to take antidepressants?
- What scientific evidence (from peer-reviewed studies) was cited in the article, if any?
- What other sources of evidence were presented, if any?

**READ:** Print a class set of copies of the PDF "7.7 – CDC Suicide Fact sheet" found in the folder of lesson resources. The source can also be found at: [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/suicide\\_factsheet\\_2012-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/suicide_factsheet_2012-a.pdf).

**THINK:** Ensure students are accessing credible sources!



**Risk Factors for Suicide**

List 3 different risk factors for suicide and explain why you believe they are risk factors. Consider age, gender, past medical history, environment, etc.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



**Suicide Warning Signs**

Research warning signs for suicide. Use any credible source, but consider starting at the American Association of Suicidality website (<http://www.suicidology.org>). List the warning signs you find in the table below, along with the sources used.

Suicide Warning Signs

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Sources

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**ASSESS:** See list of risk factors earlier in lesson.

**HOMEWORK:** The warning signs can be found at this URL: <http://www.suicidology.org/resources/multimedia-resources/suicide-warning-signs>. One easy-to-remember mnemonic is “IS PATH WARM”? Which stands for Ideation, Substance abuse, Purposelessness, Anxiety, Trapped, Hopelessness, Withdrawal, Anger, Recklessness, & Mood changes.