

# Seniors and Suicide

## Understanding the Facts:

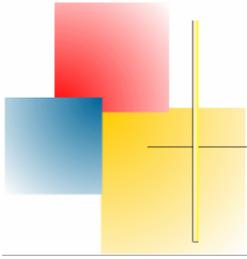
- Older age is often a time of significant changes for people. Managing losses that accompany the life transitions of aging can be hard to handle.
- According to Statistics Canada, individuals in the 'over 55yrs of age' category have the highest rate of suicide in Canada.
- Seniors experiencing suicidal thoughts may present with physical complaints rather than depression.
- Often depression or suicidality is missed or misdiagnosed because symptoms can be mistaken for other diagnosis or "problems of the aged".
- Seniors show less warning signs before serious suicide attempts.
- Seniors will report less history of attempts than younger people.
- In 2004 the World Health Organization reported 847 suicide deaths of seniors in Canada.

## Risk Factors:

- Experiencing unbearable pain (physical / emotional)
- Feeling sadness, helpless, hopeless, and worthless.
- Indifference towards usual activities
- Isolation / social withdrawal
- Increase in using alcohol and medications.
- Prolonged illness or disability - loss of independence ( living, self-care)
- Feelings of failure shame, guilt, anger
- Recurrent thoughts of self-harm, preoccupation with death
- Difficulty coping with loss (people, life roles, independence)
- Conflicted, confused, torn, struggling with life.
- Changes in appetite and/or sleeping.
- Loss of function and independence
- Unfamiliar (long term care) surroundings

**The Suicide Awareness Council Wellington-Dufferin is dedicated to helping reduce suicide and its impact on individuals, families, and communities.**

If you find this fact sheet useful, please feel free to make copies and pass it along to others. For more information about the Council, go to [www.suicideawarenesscouncil.wordpress.com](http://www.suicideawarenesscouncil.wordpress.com)



## Seniors and Suicide Continued. . .

When an older person has been showing signs they may be at risk of suicide, then suddenly appear happier and calmer - **Pay attention - this may indicate an imminent suicide plan.**

### What Seniors' might say:

- If I have to live in pain I don't want to live anymore
- I can't take it anymore.
- I can't drive, go out, or bathe myself anymore, what's left.
- Nobody cares.
- I don't want to be a burden.
- I'm lonely, there's no one left.
- I'm useless.
- Death isn't a bad thing.
- I might as well be dead.
- You're better off without me.
- Nobody really loves me.
- Do you really think I matter?
- I've lost everything.
- I hate living here.

### How can you help?

- Stay with the person and get help.
- Reach out to family, friends, clergy, doctors and community resources.
- Be concerned.
- Listen and take them seriously.
- Don't debate their feelings or thoughts.
- State your concerns - ask the person how they feel and what is going on for them.

**Source:** Information for this Fact sheet was taken with permission from the *Older Persons' Mental Health and Addictions Network* brochure content.

### **For more information check out:**

[www.suicideinfo.ca](http://www.suicideinfo.ca)

[www.ontariosuicidepreventionnetwork.ca](http://www.ontariosuicidepreventionnetwork.ca)