



Suicide and Mood Disorders

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger or imminent crisis of suicide, call 911.

Facts about suicide

- Thoughts of suicide are a common symptom of mood disorders.
- 80% of suicides are carried out by individuals suffering from a depressive illness.
- 50 to 80% of seniors who commit suicide have a history of major depression.
- Women suffering through a depressive episode most often attempt suicide in the latter stages of the episode.
- Women are 3 to 4 times more likely to attempt suicide than men but men are more likely to die by suicide.
- Males attempt suicide early in the depressive episode.

Who's at risk?

- Older adults are at higher risk due to life change and transitions through loss, lifestyle changes due to physical disability, moving from independent living to assisted living and social isolation and abuse.
Warning signs: appetite changes, lack of participation in social events, signs of abuse and neglect.
- Young people are at higher risk due to family and school pressures, major life changes, hormone changes, bullying and sexual orientation issues.
Warning signs: eating disorders, deliberate self harm, withdrawal from normal activities, exceptional and extreme mood swings, perfectionistic behaviour or extreme self critical behaviour.
- People who have recently had a major loss or life change are at higher risk as grief changes to depression lasting several weeks or longer.
Warning signs: major changes in attitude, changes in eating or sleeping habits, loss of energy or loss of interest in things that were once enjoyed.

Especially vulnerable are:

- People who are recovering from an episode of depression or who have a history of suicide attempts or who have just been released from hospital.

Warning signs

- **Unbearable feelings:** depression can cause extreme feelings of hopelessness, despair and self-doubt. The more acute the feelings the higher the suicide risk.
- **Putting affairs in order:** making final plans, preparing wills or life insurance or arranging for the family's welfare.
- **Rehearsing suicide:** seriously discussing one or more specific suicide methods, purchasing weapons and collecting large quantities of medication or rationalizing suicide as a viable option.
- **Drug or alcohol abuse:** intoxication may cause impulsive behaviour and make the person more likely to act on suicidal thoughts.
- **Isolation:** cutting off friendships and social connections.
- **Sudden sense of calm:** someone with an active mood disorder who has just passed an episode's lowest point on the way to recovery suddenly appears calm and settled in such a way that is not in keeping with their state of recovery.

Getting help if you are feeling suicidal

- Call the doctor.
- Keep in contact with trusted friends.
- Make a "Plan for Life" and promise yourself that you will follow it when you have suicidal thoughts.
- Give a copy of the life plan to your family and friends.
- Learn to recognize the symptoms of suicide. Don't be ashamed. Remember feelings are not facts. Suicidal feelings are a symptom of your illness. You need help and support to get through them but you will get through them.

The Mood Disorders Association of Ontario provides support, information and education as a complement to traditional and alternative therapies. MDAO services are not intended as a replacement for other treatment options and encourages individuals to seek treatment by a qualified health professional.

Mood Disorders Association of Ontario (MDAO)

36 Eglinton Avenue West, Suite 602, Toronto, Ontario M4R 1A1 Telephone: 416.486.8046 Toll-free: 1.888.486.8236
Fax: 416.486.8127 E-mail: info@mooddisorders.on.ca Website: www.mooddisorders.on.ca