

# Sept. 10 Is Suicide Prevention Day

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This year marks the 12th anniversary of Suicide Prevention Day. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 800,000 people around the world die due to suicide every year and there are thousands more who attempt suicide.

Every suicide is a tragedy that affects families, communities and entire countries and has long-lasting effects on the people left behind. Suicide occurs throughout the lifespan and was the second leading cause of death among 15-to 29-year-olds globally in 2012.

Suicide is a serious public health problem; however, suicides are preventable with timely, evidence-based and often low-cost interventions.

## Who Is at Risk?

While the link between suicide and mental disorders (in particular, depression and alcohol use disorders) is well-established in high-income countries, many suicides happen impulsively in moments of crisis with a breakdown in the ability to deal with life stresses, such as financial problems, relationship break-up or chronic pain and illness.

In addition, experiencing conflict,

disaster, violence, abuse, or loss and a sense of isolation are strongly associated with suicidal behavior. Suicide rates are also high amongst vulnerable groups who experience discrimination, such as refugees and migrants; indigenous peoples; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI) persons; and prisoners. By far the strongest risk factor for suicide is a previous suicide attempt.

## Prevention and Control

Suicides are preventable. There are a number of measures that can be taken at population, sub-population and individual levels to prevent suicide and suicide attempts. These include:

- Reducing access to the means of suicide (e.g. pesticides, firearms, certain medications);
- Reporting by media in a responsible way;
- Introducing alcohol policies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol;
- Early identification, treatment and care of people with mental and substance use disorders, chronic pain and acute emotional distress;
- Training of non-specialized health workers in the assessment and management of suicidal behavior;
- Follow-up care for people who attempted suicide and provision of



community support.

Suicide is a complex issue and therefore suicide prevention efforts require coordination and collaboration among multiple sectors of society, including the health sector and other sectors such as education, labor, agriculture, business, justice, law, defense, politics, and the media. These efforts must be comprehensive and integrated as no single approach alone can make an impact on an issue as complex as suicide.

## Challenges And Obstacles

Stigma, particularly surrounding mental disorders and suicide, means many people thinking of taking their own life or who have attempted suicide are not seeking help and are therefore not getting the help they need. The prevention of suicide has not been adequately addressed due to a lack of awareness of suicide as a major public health problem and the taboo in many societies to openly discuss it.

Raising community awareness and breaking down the taboo is important to make progress in preventing suicide.

On Sept. 10, the International Association for Suicide Prevention is asking you to light a candle at 8 p.m. and place it in a window to

show your support for World Suicide Prevention Day and suicide prevention across the world.

Specific assistance is available for veterans ([www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)), youth ([www.youmatter.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.youmatter.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)) and bullying ([www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)). Spanish-language assistance is available at ([www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/spanish.aspx](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/spanish.aspx).)

Long Island Crisis Center's most important community event is its Annual Suicide Awareness Walk on Sunday, Sept. 20, on the Long Beach Boardwalk, beginning at Laurelton Boulevard. On-site registration begins at 10:30 a.m. The walk begins at 11:30 a.m. This casual, family-friendly walking event is an important opportunity to promote suicide prevention and raise awareness of the center's lifesaving services.

The Long Island Crisis Center is located at 2740 Martin Ave. in Bellmore. Visit [www.longislandcrisiscenter.org](http://www.longislandcrisiscenter.org) or call the 24-hour crisis hotline at 516-679-1111. Crisis counselors are also available at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255).

—Christy Hinko contributed to this article.

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