

SUICIDE PREVENTION



On the 10th of September it is World Suicide Prevention Day and the focus this year is on raising general awareness of the fact that suicide can indeed be prevented.

According to the World Health Organization, South Africa has a suicide mortality rate of 2.7 per 100 000 population in 2012, the last year for which statistics are available.

According to the Crime, Violence and Injury Prevention Review – 8 – 11% of non-natural deaths in South Africa due to suicides, which would translate into 21 suicides per day.

For every woman who commits suicide, five men do and they generally use more lethal and violent methods of suicide, such as hanging and shooting.

Worldwide, there are 25 suicide attempts for every successful suicide.

Stressful life situations can lead to people taking their own lives, but it is something that can be prevented.

Here are some warning signs of suicide, but they aren't always as obvious as these:

- Talking about suicide and death
- Deciding on a suicide method and making the necessary preparations
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Mood swings
- Feeling hopeless or trapped
- Changing the normal routine
- Increasing use of drink and drugs
- Getting affairs in order

- Saying goodbye to people
- Having high anxiety levels

The stigma surrounding mental illness and suicide prevents people from discussing the topic openly and this often stops many people from getting the help they need.

Access to suitable care and a caring environment is of course paramount to preventing suicides and are things societies can provide – as is legislation with regards to weapons and dangerous substances.

But there are things you can do to help a loved one that you think is at risk:

- Remove access to the means of committing suicide (taking away pesticides, guns, stockpiled medication)
- Talk openly to this person about suicide without being judgmental
- Make yourself available to this person and be supportive and don't leave them alone if they are experiencing a crisis
- Help this person to access the right professional help and support

If you are needing a referral to a psychologist, psychiatrist or support group, please can you call The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) on 011 234 4837 or 0800 20 50 26 and speak to a trained counsellor who can assist you further.

In the interest of our patients, in accordance with SA law and our commitment to expertise, MediHub cannot subscribe to the practice of online diagnosis. Please consult a medical professional for specific medical advice. If you have any major concerns, please see your doctor for an assessment. If you have any cause for concern, your GP will be able to direct you to the appropriate specialists.