Poison as a Means for Suicide and Self-harm Attempts: Data and Prevention Strategies

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Objectives

- Review national suicide data and the means of poison within that context.
- Discover suspected suicide and self-harm data reported to poison control centers nationwide.
- Learn strategies to prevent and decrease poison self-harm and suicide attempts.
Taking Care of Yourself

- We have all been touched by loss at some time in our lives.

- If you are a survivor grieving suicide, you are not alone.

- If you find that the information we’re talking about stirs painful emotional memories, take care of yourself and seek support.

Courtesy: Minnesota Department of Health
An Overview of National Suicide Data
Poll

Poisoning is the _____ leading means of suicide in the U.S.

a. 1st
b. 2nd
c. 3rd
d. 4th
e. 5th
Suicide Deaths by Means, U.S.—2020¹

- Firearms: 53%
- Poisoning: 12%
- Suffocation: 27%
- Other: 8%

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
Means of Suicide by Age, U.S.—Males, 2020²

Centers for Disease Control-WISQARS, Fatal Data Visualization
Means of Suicide by Age, U.S.—Females, 2020²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Firearm</th>
<th>Poisoning</th>
<th>Suffocation</th>
<th>All Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24 Years</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44 Years</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64 Years</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+ Years</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Centers for Disease Control-WISQARS, Fatal Data Visualization
An Overview of National Poison Data System Findings
About NPDS Data

- The National Poison Data System (NPDS) houses case data for the nation’s 55 poison control centers.
- Poison control centers submit de-identified cases in near-real time to NPDS.
- The NPDS database features about 75 million case records.
- NPDS data is not reflective of all poison exposures—it contains only those cases in which poison control centers were consulted.
Suspected Suicide/Self-Harm Cases Over Time

% of Cases Related to Suspected Suicide/Self-Harm, NPDS

NPDS Report: Exposure Reason
Self-harm/Suspected Suicide Exposures, by Gender—2017-2022⁴

Suspected Suicide/Self-Harm Cases by Gender, NPDS

- 2017
- 2018
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022

NPDS Report: Reason by Gender
Age for Fatalities, Suspected Suicide—2022

Age for Fatalities, NPDS

NPDS Report: Annual Reports-Table 8, Distribution of Reason for Exposure and Age for Fatalities
Deaths by Leading Substance Categories—2022 (Intentional and Unintentional Exposures)

NPDS Report: Annual Reports-Table 18, Categories Associated with Largest Number of Fatalities
Strategies to Prevent and Decrease Poison Suicide and Self-harm
Suicide Can Be Prevented.

You Can Be a Lifeline.

#BeThe1To
If you think someone might be considering suicide, be the one to help them by taking these 5 steps:
ASK. KEEP THEM SAFE. BE THERE. HELP THEM CONNECT. FOLLOW UP.

Find out why this can save a life at www.BeThe1To.com
If you’re struggling, call the Lifeline at 988

BeThe1To Know the Steps (youtube.com)
988 offers 24/7 access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing mental health-related distress including:

- thoughts of suicide
- mental health or substance use crisis
- any other kind of emotional distress

Numerous studies have shown that most callers are significantly more likely to feel less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful after speaking to a 988 crisis counselor.

Source: 988 Partner Toolkit | SAMHSA and https://988lifeline.org/current-events/the-lifeline-and-988/
Strategies—Medicine Safety

- Keep all medicines (both prescription and over the counter) locked in a safe place.
- Know what medicines you have and how much you have of each.
- Limit the amount (number of pills) someone has access to in the home.
- Discuss medicine safety with teens who self-administer medication.
- Dispose of expired or unused medicine at take back events, pharmacies, and local police stations.
  - DEA take back events: https://www.dea.gov/takebackday
Medicine Safety/Take-Back Initiatives

- National Prescription Drug Take Back Day (usually in April): [Take Back Day (dea.gov)]
- Partner’s Toolbox for promotion: [Partnership Toolbox (dea.gov)]
- Year-round drop-off locations: [Year-Round Drop-Off Locations - Search Utility (usdoj.gov)]
- Disposing of medications safely at home: [Where and How to Dispose of Unused Medicines | FDA]
Strategies—Poison Control

1-800-222-1222

Free. Confidential. 24/7.
How NC Poison Control Helps When People Attempt Suicide/Self-harm by Poison

- Poison control is staffed by nurses, pharmacists, and doctors who can provide treatment recommendations when someone has attempted self-harm or suicide by poisoning.

- Poison control staff can follow patients who have overdosed or attempted suicide.

- Healthcare providers often seek treatment advice from poison control when they suspect a patient has attempted suicide or self-harm.

- Poison control can refer callers who are contemplating suicide to 988.
In Summary

- Know the top means for suicide—poisoning is the 3rd leading means of suicide in the U.S.
- Include medication as a lethal means into community education about suicide prevention.
- Promote safe medication storage and usage practices.
- Partner with poison control to reduce and prevent poison suicide in your community.
References

¹ Suicide Prevention Resource Center. Means of Suicide | Suicide Prevention Resource Center (sprc.org). 2023 2 22.


⁷ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 988 Partner Tool Kit. 988 Partner Toolkit | SAMHSA. Accessed 2023 2.


Questions?

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