



# Fitzgerald

Health Education Associates™  
fhea.com

Resource 13-1: Risk Factors for Suicide	
Psychiatric illness	Severity of psychiatric illness Recent psychiatric inpatient hospitalization Higher among alcoholics
Hopelessness	More important than depression in explaining suicidal ideation Often mediates between <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Loneliness</li> <li>• Interpersonal losses</li> <li>• Suicide</li> </ul>
History of previous suicide attempt or threat	Strongest single predictive factor Up to 50% of successful victims have made a prior attempt. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 of every 100 attempt survivors will die by suicide within 1 year.</li> </ul>
Age, sex and race	Young people attempt more often Females attempt 4× more than men Men complete 3× more than women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely reflects lethality of method (firearm use, hanging, others)</li> </ul> Elderly white men (>85 years) have highest suicide rate. Whites>Blacks, but this gap is narrowing.
Marital status	Living alone increases the suicide risk. Lost loved one or failed relationship within one year
Occupation	Unemployed and unskilled at greater risk
Health status	Higher risk with chronic pain or terminal illness HIV alone does not seem to increase risk.
Adverse childhood experiences	The more adverse events, the higher the suicidal risk
Family history	6× greater risk with a first-degree relative who committed suicide
Antidepressants	No clear increase in suicides Increase in suicidal thought/ideation, especially in younger adults
Other	Accessibility to weapons Anniversary of significant relationship loss Rural areas greater than urban areas LGBT youth

Source: Kaplan, H., Sadock, B. (2014). Kaplan & Sadock's Synopsis of Psychiatry: Behavioral Sciences/Clinical Psychiatry, (11th Ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Fitzgerald Health Education Associates. All rights reserved. Reproduction is prohibited.  
Prior permission required for use of questions or course content.

85 Flagship Drive  
North Andover, MA 01845-6154

VM • 978 • 794 • 8366  
FAX • 978 • 794 • 2455

email • [cs@fhea.com](mailto:cs@fhea.com)  
Internet • <https://www.fhea.com>