

## Understanding the Facts

- Older age is often a time of significant change for people. Managing losses that accompany the life transitions of aging can be hard to handle.
- According to Statistics Canada, individuals in the 'over 55 years of age' category have the highest rate of suicide in Canada.
- Seniors experiencing suicidal thoughts may present with physical complaints rather than a mental health ones.
- Often depression or suicidality is missed or misdiagnosed because symptoms can be mistaken for other diagnosis or "problems of the aged".



**SUICIDE AWARENESS COUNCIL  
OF WELLINGTON - DUFFERIN**

*The Suicide Awareness Council  
Wellington-Dufferin is dedicated to  
helping reduce suicide and its impact  
on individuals, families, and communities.*

**[www.sacwd.ca](http://www.sacwd.ca)**

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# SENIORS & SUICIDE



## Risk Factors:

- Experiencing unbearable pain (physical / emotional)
- Feeling sadness, helpless, hopeless, and worthless
- Indifference towards usual activities
- Isolation/social withdrawal
- Increased use of alcohol and medications
- Prolonged illness or disability - loss of independence ( living, self-care)
- Feelings of failure, shame, guilt, anger
- Recurrent thoughts of self-harm, preoccupation with death
- Difficulty coping with loss (people, life roles, independence)
- Conflicted, confused, torn, struggling with life
- Changes in appetite and/or sleeping
- Loss of function and independence



When an older person has been showing signs they may be at risk of suicide, then suddenly appear happier and calmer - **Pay attention - this may indicate an imminent suicide plan.**

## What Seniors' might say:

- If I have to live in pain I don't want to live anymore.
- I can't take it anymore.
- I can't drive, go out, or bathe myself anymore, what's left?
- Nobody cares.
- I don't want to be a burden.
- I'm lonely, there's no one left.
- I'm useless.
- Death isn't a bad thing.
- I might as well be dead.
- You're better off without me.
- Nobody really loves me.
- I've lost everything.



## How can you help?

- Stay with the person and get help. If someone is in crisis, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department
- Reach out to family, friends, clergy, doctors, community supports.
- Even if the person denies feelings of suicide they will know you are a "safe" person to talk to when they need to.
- Be concerned.
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- Listen and take them seriously. Don't judge.
- Don't debate their feelings or thoughts. Be supportive.
- State your concerns - ask the person how they feel and what is going on for them.
- Talk, listen and be present.

