Suicide: With Help Comes Hope

Suicide is a preventable public health problem, and one of the most effective ways to prevent it is to talk about it.

Suicide is the number one cause of death for North Dakota residents ages 15 - 24, and the 9th leading cause of death overall. In the US, men between the ages of 45-64 have the highest rates of completing suicide—but women attempt suicide more often than men.

It is hard to talk about suicide – yet talking about it can turn despair to hope. Contrary to common belief, most people who are considering suicide say or do things that can alert others in time to get help. Often, though, the listener may feel uncomfortable asking straight out if the person is considering suicide. Taking a short course in suicide intervention, whether in person or on-line, can help you respond more confidently to someone who may be considering suicide. Lay-people with this type of training are sometimes called ‘gate-keepers’. More gate-keepers in a school, group or community can help reduce the risk of suicide.

Most people with thoughts of suicide don’t truly want to die, but they are struggling with the pain in their lives. The suicide alertness program safeTALK offers this advice when talking to someone who exhibits warning signs of suicide:

1. **Tell**: “Sometimes when people (think, feel, say, do) those things, they have thoughts of suicide.
2. **Ask**: “Are you thinking about suicide?”
3. **Listen** to the response.
4. **Keepsafe**: “I think it’s important for you to talk to someone who can help you. I can make a call for you…”

Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone—young or old, rich or poor, woman or man. Visit www.ndhealth.gov/suicideprevention to learn more about preventing suicide. Stay alert for warning signs and rehearse your response. You could be the difference between life and death.

Warning Signs

Some people who die by suicide don’t show any warning signs, but most do. Be alert for these signs:

- Appearing depressed or sad most of the time (Untreated depression is the number one cause for suicide.)
- Talking or writing about death or suicide
- Withdrawing from family and friends; losing interest in most activities
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, or isolated
- Feeling strong anger or rage
- Experiencing dramatic mood changes
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Acting impulsively or recklessly
- Changing personality, sleeping habits, eating habits, work or school performance
- Giving away prized possessions or writing a will
- Feeling excessive guilt or shame
- Talking about having no reason to live, feeling trapped or in unbearable pain, or being a burden to others

National Infant Immunization Week

April 22-29 is National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW). It is an annual observance to highlight the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases and to celebrate the achievements of immunization programs in promoting healthy communities throughout the United States.
The Healthiest Nation in 1 Generation

Public health is credited with adding 25 years to the life expectancy of people in the United States in this century. Yet, ask the average person what public health is and their reply might be limited to: "healthcare for low-income families." CDC's Ten Great Public Health Achievements in the 20th Century was created to remind us of how far we’ve come, how we got here, and exactly what public health is: the active protection of our nation's health and safety, credible information to enhance health decisions, and partnerships with local minorities and organizations to promote good health. While personal healthcare addresses symptoms in individuals, public health uses a systems approach to improve the health of an entire community.

Ten Great 20th Century Public Health Achievements

- Immunizations
- Motor Vehicle Safety
- Workplace Safety
- Control of Infectious Diseases
- Declines in Heart Disease
- Safer and Healthier Food
- Healthier Mothers and Babies
- Family Planning
- Fluoridation of Drinking Water
- Tobacco as a Health Hazard

Source: www.CDC.gov

‘Smokeless’ Doesn’t Mean Harmless

People who dip or use chewing tobacco get about the same amount of nicotine as regular smokers. They also get at least 30 chemicals that are known to cause cancer. The most harmful cancer-causing substances in smokeless tobacco are **tobacco-specific nitrosamines** (TSNAs). TSNA levels vary by product, but the higher the level the greater the cancer risk.

Cancers linked to the use of smokeless tobacco include:

- Mouth, tongue, cheek, and gum cancer
- Cancer in the esophagus
- Pancreatic cancer

Mouth cancer is newly diagnosed in 132 people in the US—**every day**.

“All It Takes is a Pinch”

In nearly all of North Dakota, you can now text 911 if you can’t call. **A voice (or TTY) call is always the best way to contact 911.** But if you don’t have enough cell service or can’t speak out loud for safety’s sake, you can send a text to 911. Be sure to include your name and location and the nature of the emergency. If your text doesn’t reach your local 911 call center, you will receive a bounce-back message.