

# Suicide Risk and COVID-19

Adapted from: The Impact of Infectious Disease-Related Public Health Emergencies on Suicide, Suicidal Behavior, and Suicidal Thoughts<sup>1</sup>



Read more here: <https://discoversociety.org/2020/11/04/on-the-relationship-between-pandemics-and-suicide/>

## What do we know from past pandemics?

Russian Flu – Increase in suicides by 25%<sup>2</sup> in England and Wales

Spanish Flu – Suicide rates in the USA showed weak positive correlation with mortality rates from flu<sup>3</sup>

SARS – Significant increase in suicides in women 65 and older<sup>4</sup>

## What factors might put someone at risk?

Yip et al<sup>5</sup>, examined suicides after SARS and found the following risk factors:

- a. Disconnection/Isolation
- b. Fear of becoming ill

The following factors may also increase risk during COVID-19:

- a. Financial Insecurity
- b. Pessimism (COVID Fatigue)

## Keep an eye on your wellbeing

- a. Limit your time on the internet/social media and watching the news (if you find this upsetting)
- b. Monitor your mental health for early warning signs like chronic poor sleep, changes in appetite, increase in irritability, or a decreased enjoyment in activities
- c. Remove access to means.
  - i. Get rid of unused medications
  - ii. Lock up current medications
  - iii. Make sure any firearms are properly stored

## Get creative in addressing loneliness

- a. Have regular video calls with friends and family (try having a meal or playing a game over Zoom together!)
- b. Find virtual community events like concerts or book clubs
- c. Try a new hobby

## What can you do if you feel you need help?

- a. Access free virtual supports, like Wellness Together Canada ([ca.portal.gc.ca](https://ca.portal.gc.ca))
- b. Call or text a crisis service (Call 1-833-456-4566 or Text 45645)
- c. Contact your health care professional
- d. If you need immediate help, call 911 or go to an emergency department

To access the most recent information on how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting suicide rates worldwide visit: <https://f1000research.com/articles/9-1097>

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