Suicide Risk Factors

It is important for the provider to assess a patient who may be at risk for suicide. Suicide risk factors are plenty and accurate assessment of each of them could lead to prevention of an attempt. Any patient who has risk factors for suicide should be fully assessed for suicide risk.



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Depression
Depressed-emo
Major depressive disorder is one of the strongest risk factors for suicide. Decreased serotonin activity in the CNS has been associated with suicidal behavior. Patients with hopelessness, anhedonia, or feelings of worthlessness are at particularly high risk.

Previous Attempt
Previous Jump
A history of prior suicide attempt is the single strongest predictor of future suicide. The risk is especially elevated within the first year after an attempt.

Lack of Support System
No Supportive-friends to catch
Social isolation, unemployment, or loss of close relationships increase suicide risk. The absence of protective social supports can intensify feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

Access to Firearms or Medications
Access to Guns and Med-bottles
Access to firearms is the most significant modifiable environmental risk factor for suicide in the United States. Easy access to lethal medications, such as opioids or benzodiazepines, also heightens risk.

Substance Use Disorder
Substance Used
Chronic or acute alcohol and drug use lowers inhibition and increases impulsivity, both of which raise suicide risk. Substance use is present in up to 50% of suicide cases.

Physical or Sexual Abuse
Physically Abused by Sex-symbols
Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, especially during childhood, significantly increases the risk of suicide. These individuals often experience chronic shame, guilt, or post-traumatic stress.

Chronic Illness or Pain
Crone with Illness and Pain-bolt
Chronic illnesses such as cancer, chronic pain syndromes, HIV, or neurologic diseases (e.g., multiple sclerosis) are associated with an increased risk of suicide. Patients may perceive death as a relief from ongoing suffering.

Extremes of Age
Old-man and Young-teen
Suicide rates are highest among adolescents and older adults. Adolescents may act impulsively in response to acute stressors. Older adults, particularly men over 65, have a higher completion rate due to the use of more lethal means and social isolation.

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