

Youth Mental Health March

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Mental Health Facts: SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Focused

Terms

Mental illness is characterized by alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour associated with significant distress and impaired functioning that can arise from a mix of factors including biological, personal, environmental and genetics.

General Anxiety Disorder or *Anxiety* is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.

Prevention works to build protective factors and promote mental health and well-being and reduce risk factors that could lead to anything negative.

Intervention works to address risks. It focuses on how to best respond to someone who may be in crisis.

Postvention works to help support and heal the ones who are affected after the loss or experienced suicide as well as providing follow-up education to reduce the risk again of future crises.

Stigma refers to negative, unfavourable attitudes and the behaviour they produce. It is a form of prejudice that spreads fear and misinformation, labels individuals and perpetuates stereotypes. Stigma may prevent people from seeking the help that they need.

Suicide is “death caused by self-directed injurious behaviour with any intent to die as a result of the behaviour”.

Suicide attempt is a “non-fatal self-directed potentially injurious behaviour with any intent to die as a result of the behaviour. A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury”.

Intent of suicide refers to the aim, purpose, or goal of ending one’s own life rather than the behaviour itself.

Suicide prevention is an umbrella term for the collective efforts of governments, local citizen organizations, mental health professionals to enhance the safety from suicide related behaviour and reduce the incidence of suicide.

Canada’s Mental Health During SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)

- In March of 2020, 54% of Canadians reported having very good or higher mental health
- In May of 2020, 48% of Canadians reported having very good or higher mental health

Get Loud About What Really Matters Most

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- 27% of people aged 15 to 24 have reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety
- 19% of people aged 25 to 64 have reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety
- 10% of people aged 65 and older have reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety
- In the last two weeks, about 18% of Canadians reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety
- Women are more likely to report symptoms of moderate or severe anxiety when compared to men
- Youth in Canada are more likely to be at risk for poor mental health during the pandemic
- 87% of people aged 15 to 30 are very concerned about the impact that COVID-19 will have on the health of vulnerable people
- 21% of people aged 15 to 30 are very concerned about their own health during the pandemic
- 34% of people aged 15 to 30 are very concerned about social ties during the pandemic
- 9 in 10 youth communicate with their friends and family during the pandemic with females more likely than males to communicate with family and friends
- Youth are more concerned about the health of others than the health of themselves

Global Suicide Risk from SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)

- Suicide is more likely to become a pressing concern as the pandemic lasts and has long-term effects on people including economic, social and other effects on vulnerable groups
- There is some evidence that suicide rates increased during the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic and during the 2003 SARS Epidemic
- The adverse effects on people with mental illness, and on a population with mental health in general, may be exacerbated by fear, isolation, and distance
- People with diagnosed mental illnesses or other conditions may experience new conditions such as depression, anxiety or PTSD or worsening symptoms
- Many will not seek help for fear of services being overcrowded and due to stigma and fear of face-to-face appointments and possibly being infected with SARS-CoV-2
- The Pandemic could also affect risk factors for suicide such as rise in domestic violence or alcohol consumption
- Social isolation, entrapment and loneliness are expected to rise during the pandemic
- Repeated exposure to the increased risk of suicide during the Pandemic could evoke fear and cause a further rise in suicide and a rise in suicide risk
- Repeated exposure to stories of the Pandemic could evoke fear and cause a further rise in suicide and a rise in suicide risk
- The suicide related consequences of the Pandemic will vary depending on how hard each country was hit by SARS-CoV-2 and how the country responded to it. It will also depend on public health measures, sociocultural and demographics and how much access a person may have to help during the Pandemic
- The mental health effects of the pandemic will last for an extended period of time after the Pandemic is over

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- The Pandemic will cause distress and leave many people vulnerable to a mental health crisis and to suicidal behaviour

How to Improve Your Mental Health During These Times

- Talk/communicate with family
- Talk/communicate with friends
- Meditate and/or pray
- Read
- Exercise (inside or outside)
- Change and work to improve your food choices

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References

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