

How does a suicide attempt happen?

A suicide attempt may occur when a strong intent to die and the ability for lethal self-harm come together.

An intense desire to die may result from a person's *belief* that they are a burden to those close to them, or that others would be better off without them. Shame and guilt related to drug use may lead to such feelings.

An ability for lethal self-harm may arise from mentally practicing a suicide plan, a history of overdoses, IV drug use, violent experiences, and pain or trauma. Substance use often leads to "suicide talk" and vague threats. These may not initially reflect suicidal intent but over time may lessen resistance to attempting suicide.

Some Substance Use Resources:

- Gaudenzia
Crisis stabilization referral and treatment helpline
1-833- 976-4357 (24/7)
- National Drug/Alcohol Helpline
Confidential treatment and referral information In English and Spanish for individuals and families
1--800-662-HELP (4357) (24/7)
- Montgomery County Office of Drug and Alcohol
Information on services for county residents
610-279-3642 (M-F 8am-4PM)



Substance Use Disorders & Suicide Risk

**Montgomery County
Emergency Service
50 Beech Drive
Norristown, PA 19403
610-279-6102**

What is a substance use disorder (SUD)?

It involves the persistent and uncontrolled use of legal or illegal drugs (or alcohol) despite significant personal harm and adverse effects on others.

Some behavioral signs are:

- Strong need for a substance
- Compulsion to use regularly
- Growing tolerance over time
- Maintaining a ready supply
- Inability to discontinue use
- Withdrawal symptoms

Some other signs are:

- Neglecting responsibilities
- Changes in behavior
- Physical health problems
- Poor personal care
- School or work problems

How is substance use disorder related to suicide risk?

Almost all SUDs are associated with increased suicide risk. SUD confers suicide risk 10-15 times higher than that of the general population

Opioid-related suicides have doubled in recent years. Heroin use increases risk. Inhalant use and cocaine use are strongly linked to suicidal behavior.

The rate of suicide is 2-3 times higher in men with SUDs than those without SUDs. Among women, the use of substances increases the risk of suicide up to 9 times compared to women not using substances.

Over-the-counter and prescription pain medication abuse has been found to be related to suicidal behavior in youths and women.

How can SUD bring on suicidal behavior?

Not everyone with SUD will become suicidal. However, someone contending with growing substance use may lose their job, their family, and their home, and become involved with the criminal justice system.

Their situation may seem increasingly inescapable and as their feelings of entrapment grow thoughts of suicide as an escape may arise.

Relapse, dropping out of treatment, and being released from residential treatment may precipitate a suicide attempt.

SUDs can be the trigger for a suicide attempt among those who have a psychiatric condition and suicidal thoughts.

For help with substance use or thoughts of suicide call 988 anytime to talk to a crisis counselor.