

# Suicide: one person dies every 40 seconds

STAR HEALTH REPORT

The number of countries with national suicide prevention strategies has increased in the five years since the publication of World Health Organisation's (WHO) first global report on suicide, said the WHO in the lead-up to World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September 2019. But the total number of countries with strategies, at just 38, is still far too few and governments need to commit to establishing them.

"Despite progress, one person still dies every 40 seconds from suicide," said WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "Every death is a tragedy for family, friends and colleagues. Yet suicides are preventable. We call on all countries to incorporate proven suicide prevention strategies into national health and education programmes in a sustainable way."

**Second leading cause of death among young people**  
The global age-standardised suicide rate for 2016 was 10.5 per 100,000. Rates varied widely, however, between countries, from 5 suicide deaths per 100,000, to more than 30 per 100,000. While 79% of the



world's suicides occurred in low- and middle-income countries, high-income countries had the highest rate, at 11.5 per 100,000. Nearly three times as many men as women die by suicide in high-income countries, in contrast to low- and middle-income countries, where the rate is more equal.

Suicide was the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29 years, after road injury. Among teenagers aged 15-19 years, suicide was the

second leading cause of death among girls (after maternal conditions) and the third leading cause of death in boys (after road injury and interpersonal violence).

The most common methods of suicide are hanging, pesticide self-poisoning, and firearms. Key interventions that have shown success in reducing suicides are restricting access to means; educating the media on responsible reporting of suicide; implementing programmes

among young people to build life skills that enable them to cope with life stresses; and early identification, management and follow-up of people at risk of suicide.

**Pesticide regulation: an under-used but highly effective strategy**  
The intervention that has the most imminent potential to bring down the number of suicides is restricting access to pesticides that are used for self-poisoning. The high toxicity of

many pesticides means that such suicide attempts often lead to death, particularly in situations where there is no antidote or where there are no medical facilities nearby.

As indicated by the WHO, there is now a growing body of international evidence indicating that regulations to prohibit the use of highly hazardous pesticides can lead to reductions in national suicide rates. The best-studied country is Sri Lanka, where a series of bans led to a 70% fall in suicides and an estimated 93,000 lives saved between 1995 and 2015.

**Data quality needs to improve**  
The timely registration and regular monitoring of suicide at the national level are the foundation of effective national suicide prevention strategies. Yet, only 80 of the 183 WHO Member States for which estimates were produced in 2016 had good quality vital registration data. Most of the countries without such data were low- and middle-income. Better surveillance will enable more effective suicide prevention strategies and more accurate reporting of progress towards global goals.

Source: World Health Organisation

## DIABETES



### Shorter people are at higher risk of type 2 diabetes

Short stature is associated with a higher risk of type 2 diabetes, according to a new study in Diabetologia (the journal of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes). Tall stature is associated with a lower risk, with each 10 cm difference in height associated with a 41% decreased risk of diabetes in men and a 33% decreased risk in women.

Short stature has been linked to higher risk of diabetes in several studies, suggesting that height could be used to predict the risk for the condition. It has been reported that insulin sensitivity and beta cell function are better in taller people. Short stature is related to higher cardiovascular risk, a risk that might in part be mediated by cardiometabolic risk factors relevant to type 2 diabetes - for example blood pressure, blood fats and inflammation.

The findings suggest that short people might present with higher cardiometabolic risk factor levels and have higher diabetes risk compared with tall people. Specifically, liver fat contributes to the higher risk among shorter individuals and, because height appears to be largely unmodifiable during adulthood, interventions to reduce liver fat may provide alternative approaches to reduce risk associated with shorter height.

## HEALTH bulletin



### Reinforcing the value of screening for hepatitis B during pregnancy

United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) guideline update reaffirms that universal maternal testing and neonatal immunisation is effective against hepatitis B infection. Testing for hepatitis B virus (HBV) early in pregnancy, administering the first dose of neonatal hepatitis B vaccine before discharge, and providing additional hepatitis B immunoglobulin prophylaxis to infants born to women who are chronic hepatitis B carriers has reduced the burden of hepatitis B infection in the U.S. by 90% while lowering rates of perinatal transmission to <1% in appropriately managed pregnancies.

Based on a review of recent data, the USPSTF has reaffirmed their 2009 recommendation to screen all pregnant women for HBV infection at the first prenatal visit.

Providing universal neonatal immunisation against HBV, a strategy now adopted throughout much of the world, remains a key approach to eliminating hepatitis B.

## Keeping every mother and child alive

STAR HEALTH DESK

More than 5 million families across Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean spend over 40% of their non-food household expenses on maternal health services every year, says UNICEF's new analysis on maternal health released in the Women Deliver 2019 conference in Canada.

Nearly two-thirds of these households, or around 3 million, are in Asia while approximately 1.9 million are in Africa. According to the analysis, the costs of antenatal care and delivery services can deter pregnant women from seeking medical attention, endangering the lives of mothers and their babies.

"For far too many families, the sheer costs of childbirth can be catastrophic. If a family cannot afford these costs, the consequences can even be fatal," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. "When families cut corners to reduce maternal health care costs, both mothers and their babies suffer."

The report notes that although much progress has been made around the world in improving women's access to maternal services, every day over 800 still die from pregnancy-related complications. At least 7,000 stillbirths also occur every day, half of these babies who were alive when labor began, and 7,000 babies die in the first month of life. The reality is stark for the poorest women. Across South Asia, three times as many rich women

receive four or more antenatal care visits than women from poorer families.

The report also notes that globally, pregnancy-related complications are the number one cause of death among girls between 15 and 19 years of age. Because adolescent girls are still growing themselves, they are at great risk of complications if they become pregnant. In addition, their children are at higher risk of dying before their fifth birthday. Yet the report finds that child brides are less likely to receive proper medical care while pregnant or to deliver in a health facility, compared to women married as adults.

UNICEF is calling on the governments, health care providers, donors, the private sector, families

and businesses to keep every mother and child alive by:

- Investing financial resources in health systems, starting at the community level;
- Recruiting, training, retaining and managing sufficient numbers of doctors, nurses and midwives with expertise in maternal and newborn care;
- Guaranteeing clean, functional health facilities equipped with water, soap and electricity, within the reach of every mother and baby;
- Making it a priority to provide every mother and baby with the life-saving drugs and equipment needed for a healthy start in life; and
- Empowering adolescent girls and families to demand and receive quality care.



### Second death linked to vaping reported

A person in Oregon, United States died from severe lung illness in July after using an e-cigarette or other vaping device, the state's health department has reported. It is the second known death amid a national outbreak of vaping-linked respiratory illness; the first was reported in Illinois, United States in August.

In addition, health officials said they have detected an oil derived from vitamin E in many of the marijuana products used by people who became sick, the Washington Post reports. However, tests have not revealed any obvious contaminants in the nicotine samples. At least 215 severe lung illnesses that developed after vaping are being investigated in 25 states in the United States.

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# GO GOLD

## For Kids With Cancer

## Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

- Globally there are more than **3,00,000** children diagnosed with cancer each year.
- **Every 3 min** a family hears the devastating words that their child has been diagnosed with cancer.

This **SEPTEMBER** Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Ref.: American childhood cancer organization



In Search of Excellence