

Suicide Among Veterans

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A major, yet preventable health problem in the U.S. is suicide.¹ Sadly, veterans comprise nearly a quarter of suicide deaths in the U.S.¹

In 2017, a team of researchers looking at data on more than 4.8 million Veterans found that Veterans with substance use disorders had twice the risk of suicide compared to those without a substance use disorder.²

Other commonly cited factors leading to increased suicide risk in veterans as well as other groups:³

- Anger, rage, mood swings, and episodes of anxiety and agitation.
- Expressing feelings of having no reason to live
- Increased alcohol and/or substance abuse.
- Self-destructive and risky behaviors like driving while impaired.

Seek help right away if you or someone you know is experiencing signs of committing suicide.

Are Veterans at a Higher Risk for Suicide?

The suicide rate for veterans is 1.5 times higher than that of the general population.⁴

Comparing the rate among female veterans to non-Veteran adult women, the rate is 2.5 times higher.⁵ From 2001 to 2014, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) reports an increased suicide rate among women using VA health services from 14.4 per 100,000 to 17.3 per 100,000.⁶

Suicide rates are especially high among older veterans. According to the VA, in 2016, about 58% of all veterans committed suicide were among Veterans age 55 years or older.⁴

About 20 veterans commit suicide a day, and nearly three quarters are not under VA care.⁴

Several other factors, in addition to distance, play a role in higher suicide rates. Certain emotional precursors may precede suicide events, including feelings of loneliness, isolation, hopelessness, and depression.⁸ In a summary of multiple studies, the VA found a variety of factors that may increase the risk of suicide, especially where multiple factors exist, some of these include:⁹

- Acute psychosocial stressors.
- Having low cholesterol.
- Higher doses of opioid medications for pain control.
- Insomnia.
- Mental health conditions like anxiety disorder, manic-depressive disorder, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury (TBI).
- Substance abuse, especially heavy binge drinking.

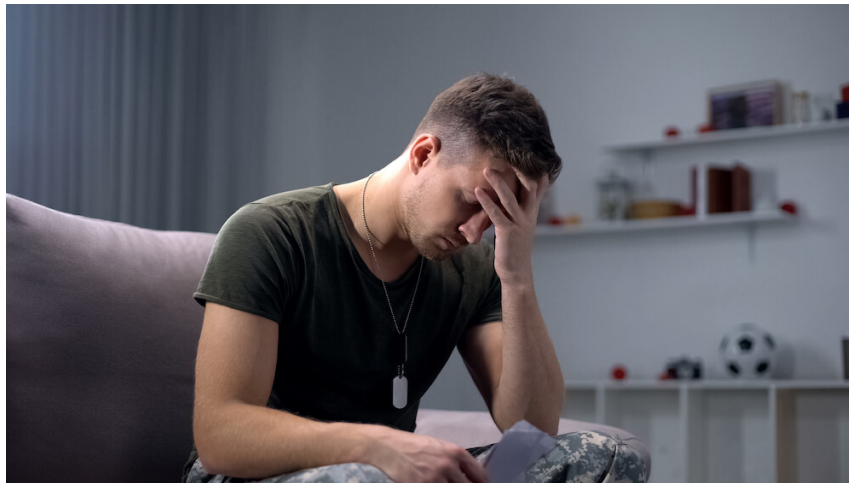
Call for Help

If you or someone you know needs help dealing with suicidal thoughts, help is available 24/7.

[National Suicide Prevention Hotline](#), call 1-800-273-8255. You can also text 838255 or [chat](#) online with a crisis counselor.

Connection between Substance Abuse and

Veteran Suicide Risk



Alcohol and substance abuse can play a particularly and significant role in the increased risk of suicide. In fact, veterans that abuse drug or alcohol are over twice as likely to die by suicide than other veterans.¹⁰ In general, people abusing drugs and alcohol are more likely:¹¹

- To be depressed.
- To have social and financial problems.
- To engage in impulsive and high-risk behaviors.

More than 1 in 10 veterans are diagnosed with a substance use disorder.¹² Veterans are more likely to use alcohol; [many are also have a greater risk opioid overdose](#).¹²

Veterans and Mental Health Care

Mental illness has strong links to suicide among veterans. While alcohol and drug abuse accounts for higher suicide risk, other [co-occurring](#) mental disorders are often associated between substance abuse and suicide.¹⁰ The more common mental disorders among veterans are PTSD and [depression](#). For example, exposure to trauma or suffering a TBI while in the service can lead to increased risk of both substance abuse and PTSD or depression.¹²

It is estimated that up to half of returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have a mental health diagnosis.¹²

Veterans coping with the dual diagnosis of [substance abuse and PTSD](#) are likely to have psychiatric and medical conditions, such as:¹²

- Anxiety disorders.
- Bipolar disorder.
- HIV.
- Liver disease.
- Schizophrenia.
- Seizures.

Treatment and Care

In spite of these grim realities, veterans have plenty of reason for hope. The VA has doubled its efforts to address the challenges that veterans face. With the passage of the [MISSION Act](#) of 2018, the federal government is making aggressive efforts at extending outreach to veterans. Among other things, the MISSION Act:¹³

- Includes provisions that enhance the recruitment of clinicians.
- Authorizes access to community urgent care providers.
- Expands telehealth services.

Treatment for Veterans at AAC

The provision of increasing access to community care providers is especially beneficial to veterans who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts or intentions.

American Addiction Centers (AAC) is a [community care provider](#).

Our [Desert Hope](#) and [Recovery First](#) faculties offer the [Salute to Recovery program](#) that employs an array of addiction treatment methods and curriculum dedicated to military veterans with substance use and mental health challenges.

Our Admissions Navigators are always available to assist you.

Call Now [\(888\) 902- VETS](#)

AAC's admissions navigators will educate you on what the process looks like and what is needed in order for the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) to [pay for a private facility on your behalf](#).

No longer do you or your loved one have to feel isolated or entirely dependent on the VA for help. Because of the MISSION Act and AAC's Salute to Recovery program, greater access to urgent care providers and treatment, in addition to crisis lines, provide much needed help and hope for the future.

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