

Preventing Suicide

Suicide claims the lives of almost 2,000 Pennsylvanians each year - an average of five lives each day. The American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division (ATSPA) wants to ensure you know the suicide warning signs and risk factors and how you can help.

Warning Signs:

- Talking about suicide, wanting to die, kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling worthless, hopeless, or having no reason to live
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Getting affairs in order, making arrangements
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Preoccupation with death
- Acting anxiously or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawal from or changing in social connection/ situation

Risk Factors:

- Diagnosis of Depression
- Previous suicide attempt
- Family history of suicide
- Loss of job, home, money
- Death or terminal illness of a loved one
- Divorce or loss of major, significant relationship
- Loss of health, either real or imagined
- Someone close to the person has completed suicide
- Recent disappointment or rejection
- Being expelled from school/fired from job
- Victim of assault or bullying
- Questioning gender



For Immediate Help:
Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division (ATSPA)
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Information courtesy of Prevent Suicide PA. Ribbon courtesy of suicidepreventionhelpline.org



The American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division (ATSPA) is a non-profit organization, dedicated to trauma prevention and mitigation through education and advocacy.

For more information visit:
www.atspa.org

THE INTERSECTION OF SUICIDE & FIREARMS

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness on this stigmatized, and often taboo, topic. This month, we delve into a sensitive topic; the relationship between firearms and suicide. While firearms serve multiple purposes, including self-defense and recreational use, it's imperative to address the sobering statistics and initiate a thoughtful conversation about prevention.

Here are some prevention strategies that are proven to help:

Safe Storage Practices: Storing firearms in a securely locked container or using gun safes can limit unauthorized access, particularly by individuals who may be struggling with mental health issues.

Education and Awareness: Promoting responsible firearm ownership, recognizing signs of mental distress in oneself and others, and fostering open conversations about mental health can contribute to prevention efforts.

Crisis Helplines and Resources: Integrating crisis helplines and mental health resources within firearm communities can provide individuals with an outlet to seek help during times of crisis.

Collaboration: Mental health professionals, firearm organizations, and policymakers should collaborate to formulate effective strategies that address the complexities of firearm access and mental health.

Destigmatization: By reducing the societal shame associated with seeking help for mental health issues, we can create an environment where individuals feel more comfortable reaching out for support.

This is not about infringing on responsible firearm ownership but rather fostering an environment of compassion, understanding, and safety. By promoting responsible storage practices, education, awareness, and collaboration, we can take meaningful steps toward preventing tragedies and ensuring the well-being of our communities.

If you or someone you know is struggling, don't hesitate to seek help from a mental health professional or a trusted individual in your life.

ATSPA also offers a rack card and fact sheet on [suicide prevention](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Informational Resources

- [Know the Warning Signs and Risk Factors of Suicide](#)
- [Being Prepared for a Crisis](#)
- [Navigating a Mental Health Crisis](#)

Crisis Resources

- If you or someone you know is in an emergency, call 911 immediately.
- If you are in crisis or are experiencing difficult or suicidal thoughts, call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273 TALK (8255) or dial 988.

Out of Harm's Way

The Trauma Prevention Publication

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TOP NEWS TOPICS

- The Intersection of Suicide & Firearms
- Healthy Aging Month
- Baby Safety Month
- Tree Stand Safety
- Latest IVP News and Research

HEALTHY AGING MONTH

Aging is a natural and inevitable process that brings about a multitude of changes in our bodies and lifestyles. While aging is a beautiful journey that comes with its own set of joys and experiences, it's important to prioritize our health and safety as we grow older. September is recognized as Healthy Aging Month, a time to highlight the importance of maintaining wellness and safety, especially for older adults. This observance not only emphasizes overall health but also addresses critical concerns like fall prevention and older adult driver safety.

One of the most pressing concerns for older adults is the risk of falls. Falls can result in severe injuries and complications that could impact a person's independence and overall quality of life. According to the World Health Organization, falls are the second leading cause of accidental or unintentional injury deaths worldwide. To mitigate this risk, several steps can be taken:

- **Regular Exercise:** Engaging in regular physical activity helps improve balance, strength, and flexibility. Activities like walking, swimming, and tai chi are excellent options that can enhance muscle tone and coordination.
- **Home Modifications:** Making simple modifications to the home environment can greatly reduce fall risks. This includes installing handrails along staircases, using non-slip mats in the bathroom, and ensuring proper lighting throughout the house.
- **Regular Health Check-ups:** Regular visits to healthcare professionals can help identify and address underlying health conditions that may contribute to fall risks. Vision and hearing checks are especially important, as sensory impairments can impact balance.
- **Medication Management:** Some medications can have side effects that affect balance and coordination. It's crucial to review medications with a doctor and discuss any potential risks.



Maintaining mobility is essential for older adults, and driving often plays a significant role in achieving this. However, changes in vision, reaction time, and physical abilities can impact driving safety. Here are some considerations for older adult driver safety:

- **Regular Vision and Hearing Checks:** Clear vision and good hearing are crucial for safe driving. Regular check-ups can help identify any issues that may affect driving ability.
- **Adaptive Driving Techniques:** Some older adults may benefit from adaptive equipment, such as larger mirrors, pedal extensions, or steering wheel covers, to make driving more comfortable and safe. [Car-Fit](#) is a great program to receive help with this.
- **Stay Informed About Medications:** Certain medications can cause drowsiness or other side effects that impair driving. It's important to be aware of these effects and avoid driving when under their influence.
- **Driving Evaluation:** Participating in a driving evaluation can help older adults assess their driving skills objectively. This evaluation can provide valuable insights into areas that may need improvement.
- **Alternative Transportation Options:** Exploring alternative transportation options, such as public transit, rideshare services, or community transportation programs, can provide safe alternatives when driving becomes challenging.

One aspect that should not be overlooked is emergency preparedness. As we age, our ability to respond swiftly to unexpected situations can be compromised. Older adults, who may have unique needs and considerations, must take steps to ensure their safety during challenging times. This involves creating a comprehensive emergency plan that includes communication strategies, medical information, and necessary supplies.

- **Communication Strategies:** Establish clear communication channels with family members, caregivers, and neighbors. Make sure your loved ones know how to reach you and have a system in place to check on each other's well-being during emergencies. If you rely on a cell phone, ensure it's always charged and consider having a backup power source.
- **Medical Information:** Keep an updated list of your medications, allergies, medical conditions, and emergency contacts. Having this information readily accessible can be a lifesaver for first responders or healthcare providers during emergencies. If you use medical devices that require electricity, inquire about battery-powered alternatives.
- **Emergency Supplies:** Prepare an emergency kit that includes essential supplies like non-perishable food, water, a flashlight, batteries, a first aid kit, any necessary medications, and important documents such as identification and insurance information. Customize the kit to your specific needs, taking into account any mobility challenges or dietary restrictions.
- **Evacuation Plan:** Familiarize yourself with evacuation routes and shelters. If you have mobility difficulties, discuss your evacuation plan with family members or neighbors who can provide assistance.
- **Community Resources:** Research community resources available to older adults during emergencies. Local organizations, senior centers, or government agencies may offer support, transportation services, or shelter options.
- **Regular Plan Review:** Revisit and update your emergency plan regularly. As circumstances change, so might your needs and the resources available to you. Stay informed about emergency alerts and weather forecasts to stay ahead of potential risks.

Healthy Aging Month is a reminder that age is just a number, and with the right approach, older adults can continue to lead vibrant and fulfilling lives. It's a time to celebrate the wisdom and experiences that come with age while also advocating for the health and safety of older adults within our communities. For more information on healthy aging, visit the [National Institute on Aging](#).

BABY SAFETY MONTH

Nurturing a Secure Start: Baby Safety at Home and on the Move

September is a month dedicated to raising awareness about the safety and well-being of our youngest family members. As we celebrate Baby Safety Month, it's crucial to highlight two fundamental aspects of infant safety: ensuring a secure environment within the home and safeguarding them during travels. From the moment they come into our lives, babies require a cocoon of protection that encompasses both their living spaces and their journeys. Let's explore how to create a haven of safety around the house and ensure child passenger seat safety on the move.

- **Baby-Proofing the Living Space:** Before a baby starts crawling or walking, it's essential to baby-proof the home to eliminate potential hazards. Install safety gates, outlet covers, and cabinet locks to prevent accidents and injuries.
- **Safe Sleep Practices:** Babies spend a significant portion of their early months sleeping. Create a safe sleep environment by placing them on their backs in a crib free of blankets, toys, and pillows. This reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- **Temperature Regulation:** Keep the baby's room at a comfortable temperature (around 68-72°F or 20-22°C) to prevent overheating or chilling. Dress them in light clothing and use sleep sacks instead of blankets.
- **Secure Furniture:** Anchor heavy furniture like bookshelves and dressers to the wall to prevent tipping accidents as babies begin to pull themselves up.
- **Kitchen Safety:** Babies are curious explorers. Keep them away from the kitchen during cooking times and ensure that pot handles are turned away from the stove's edge.
- **Bathroom Safety:** Prevent slips and burns by adjusting the water heater to a safe temperature. Always keep a hand on the baby during baths and never leave them unattended in the tub.

Child passenger safety seats are essential for ensuring the safety of young children while traveling in vehicles. Using a properly installed child passenger safety seat can reduce the risk of fatal injury for infants by 71% and for toddlers by 54% in passenger cars. Here are some important facts to know about child passenger safety seats:

- **Selecting the Right Seat:** Choose a car seat appropriate for your baby's age, weight, and height. Follow manufacturer guidelines and ensure the seat is properly installed in the back seat of the car. Pennsylvania also has some laws on what seat your child should be in. [Use this link to ensure you have the proper seat for your child.](#)
- **Seat Placement:** The back seat is the safest place for children under the age of 13. Airbags can be dangerous for young children, so they should never ride rear-facing in the front seat with an active airbag.
- **Proper Installation:** Correct installation of child safety seats is crucial for their effectiveness. Most seats are not installed properly, so it's recommended to have your seat inspected by a **certified child passenger safety technician**. Periodically inspect your child's car seat for proper installation and any signs of wear. Also, make sure the straps are snug and positioned correctly on the child. You can find a certified technician in your area by calling 1-800-CAR-BELT.
- **LATCH System:** Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH) is a system designed to make it easier to correctly install child safety seats. Check your vehicle's manual and the seat's manual for specific LATCH weight limits.
- **Expiration Dates:** Child safety seats have expiration dates on them. Over time, plastic can degrade, affecting the seat's safety. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations for replacing seats.
- **Second-Hand Seats:** It's generally not recommended to use second-hand child safety seats unless you know the seat's history, it hasn't been in a crash, and it's within its expiration date.
- **Crash Replacement:** If a child safety seat is involved in a moderate or severe crash, it's recommended to replace it, even if no visible damage is present. The forces in a crash can weaken the seat's structure.
- **Air Travel:** When flying with young children, it's safer to use an FAA-approved child safety seat on the plane, rather than holding the child on your lap. Many airlines have specific guidelines for using child seats on board.

By understanding the nuances of creating a secure home environment, and meticulously following child passenger seat safety guidelines, we offer children the precious gift of protection and care as they explore the world around them.

SEPTEMBER 2023 OBSERVANCES





Monthly Observances:

- National Emergency Preparedness Month
- Baby Safety Month
- Suicide Prevention Awareness Month
- Healthy Aging Month

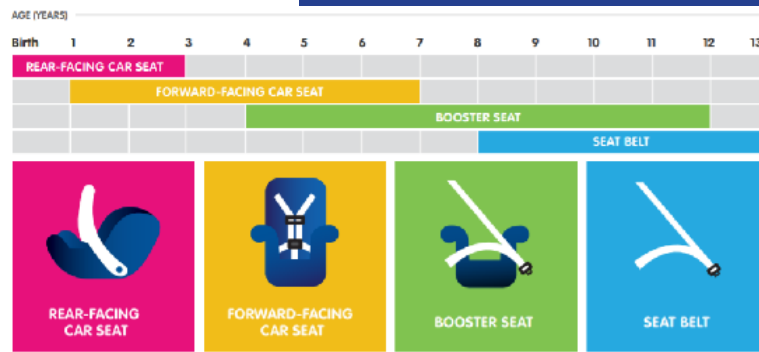
Weekly or Daily Observances:

- September 15 - National Concussion Awareness Day
- September 17-23 - Falls Prevention Awareness Week, National Farm Safety and Health Week, and National Child Passenger Safety Week
- September 23 - National Seat Check Saturday

A Reference for Proper Child Restraint Use

 <p>Rear-facing Infant or Convertible Seat A child must be rear-facing until he/she is at least 2 years of age or reaches the maximum height and weight of the rear-facing car seat. Never place a rear-facing child seat in a seating position with an active frontal air bag.</p>	<p>The Harness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straps must be at or below the child's shoulders. • Straps must fit snugly. The harness should be straight without sagging. • Chest clip should be at armpit level. 	<p>The Car Seat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be secured with the seat belt or lower anchor strap threaded through the correct belt path. • Must be tightly installed, allowing no more than one inch of side-to-side movement when pulled at the belt path. • Must be in a semi-reclined position, no more than 45 degrees, following the manufacturer's instructions.
 <p>Forward-facing Child Seat Once a child has surpassed the rear-facing child seat, he/she can move to a forward-facing child seat. Children should remain forward-facing for as long as possible, up to the maximum height and weight allowed by the seat manufacturer.</p>	<p>The Harness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straps must be at or above the child's shoulders. • Straps must fit snugly. The harness straps should be straight without sagging. • Chest clip should be at armpit level. 	<p>The Car Seat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be secured with the tether and seat belt or lower anchor strap, threaded through the correct belt path. • Must be tightly installed, allowing no more than one inch of side-to-side movement when pulled at the belt path. • Must be in an upright position, unless the manufacturer allows the seat to be reclined in the forward-facing position.
 <p>Belt Positioning Booster Seat Children should use the lap and shoulder belt, with the booster seat, until they fit the vehicle's seat belt correctly, at approximately 4 feet, 9 inches tall and between 8 to 12 years of age. Note: A child should use a high-back booster seat if the vehicle has low seatbacks or no head restraints.</p>	<p>The booster seat must be used with the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt following the correct belt path.</p> <p>The lap belt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must cross the lower hips and upper thighs, and should be snug. <p>The shoulder belt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be adjusted so it crosses the center of the shoulder and chest. • Must never be worn behind the back or under the arm. 	
 <p>Safety Belt If a child wearing a safety belt must be at least 8 years of age or 4 feet, 9 inches tall, able to wear the safety belt correctly. The lap belt should be worn and snug on the hips/upper thighs, and the shoulder belt must be snug across the center of the chest and shoulder.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passengers should sit upright with their backs against the vehicle's seat back cushion. • The child's knees should bend comfortably at the front edge of the vehicle's seat, with their feet flat on the floor. • The belt must be low and snug across the hips and upper thighs – never across the abdomen. • The shoulder belt must be snug across the center of the chest and shoulder – never behind the back or under the arm. • The head restraint should be properly positioned behind the child's head. 	

Images courtesy of the Center for Injury Research and Prevention of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.



TREESTAND SAFETY

Tree stands have revolutionized the way hunters approach their sport, providing elevated vantage points that enhance visibility and increase the chances of a successful hunt. However, if proper precautions are not taken, injuries can easily occur. Use these tips to ensure a safe and enjoyable tree stand experience.

- **Choose the Right Tree Stand:** There are various types of tree stands available, including ladder stands, hang-on stands, and climbing stands. Choose one that suits your hunting style and preferences. Ensure the tree stand is sturdy, well-constructed, and has a weight capacity that exceeds your own weight while carrying your gear.
- **Inspect Equipment Regularly:** Before every use, thoroughly examine the stand, straps, cables, and any other components for signs of wear, rust, or damage. Replace any worn-out or damaged parts promptly. The harness or safety belt should also be inspected to ensure it is in good condition and properly functioning.
- **Proper Installation:** Follow the manufacturer's instructions diligently when setting up your stand. Choose a healthy and stable tree that can support the weight and stress of the stand, and ensure the stand is securely fastened. Always use a safety harness while climbing and when seated in the stand.
- **Secure Your Gear:** Securely fasten all hunting gear, backpacks, and weapons before climbing up to the stand. Accidentally dropping objects from an elevated position can not only damage your equipment but also pose a risk to anyone below.
- **Maintain Three Points of Contact:** When climbing up to or down from the tree stand, always maintain three points of contact with the ladder or climbing equipment. This means having two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand in contact with the ladder at all times.
- **Wear a Full Body Harness:** Wearing a full body harness and attaching it to the tree at all times is perhaps the most critical safety precaution. Make sure the harness fits snugly and is properly adjusted.
- **Don't Neglect Weather Conditions:** Weather conditions can significantly impact tree stand safety. High winds, rain, or ice can make tree stands unstable and dangerous. Use common sense and avoid hunting from a stand during adverse weather conditions that could compromise your safety.
- **Be Cautious with Firearms:** If you're using firearms while hunting from a tree stand, exercise extreme caution. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and only load your weapon once you're safely in your stand. When climbing, unload your firearm and use a rope to hoist it separately.
- **Tell Someone Your Plans:** This step ensures that someone knows your whereabouts and can take action if you don't return as expected.

Remember, a successful hunt is not just about the game you bring down, but also about ensuring you return home safely to share your stories.

Latest IVP News and Research

News:

[Pennsylvania Capital Star - Pa. health care providers tell lawmakers the state's rural hospitals are in crisis](#)

[The Center Square - The 'cold, hard truth' of emergency medical services](#)

[KYW News Radio 1060AM - AG Michelle Henry meets with Philly students, learns how gun violence impacts them, their mental health](#)

Research:

Rahul Vanjani, M.D., Neha Reddy, M.P.H., Nicole Giron, M.S., Eric Bai, B.S., Sarah Martino, M.P.A., Megan Smith, M.S.W., Suzanne Harrington-Steppen, J.D., and M. Catherine Trimbur, M.D. 2023. "[The Social Determinants of Health — Moving Beyond Screen-and-Refer to Intervention.](#)" *New England Journal of Medicine* 389 (6): 569-573. Accessed August 10, 2023. doi:10.1056/NEJMms2211450.

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Save the Date

2024 ATSPA Annual Conference

April 23 & 24

Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square
25 S. Queen Street
Lancaster, PA 17603

Keep an eye on our website and newsletter
for more information!

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