

PREGNANCY AND SUICIDAL IDEATION

Suicide is a major contributor to global death rates and a leading cause of maternal deaths.

Depression is a major risk factor for suicide.



In South Africa, about one in five women experience depression during or after pregnancy.

“Although our understanding of the prevalence and consequences of antenatal major depression has improved, our understanding of suicidal ideation - a common aspect of major depression - during pregnancy is limited.”

Gavin, A et al
doi:10.1007/s00737-011-0207-5

WHAT IS SUICIDAL IDEATION?

Suicidal ideation is when a person has persistent thoughts of committing suicide. In some cases, these thoughts can escalate to making plans and attempting suicide.

RISK FACTORS

- Depression or anxiety
- Exposure to intimate partner violence
- Living in poverty
- Living in a dangerous environment
- Exposure to substance abuse
- A past suicide attempt

MYTHS

MYTH: Suicide only occurs in people suffering from a mental health problem.

MYTH: If someone thinks about suicide, they are determined to die.

MYTH: Suicide happens suddenly, without warning.

FACTS

FACT: Some people have suicidal thoughts or behaviours without having a mental health problem.

FACT: Thinking about suicide may or may not lead to planning or acting out these thoughts.

FACT: Most suicides often follow after some warning signs.

WARNING SIGNS

Care providers and family should look out for warning signs, which may present as depressive symptoms.

Talk of suicide or dying and other depressive symptoms should not be ignored.

We suggest care providers routinely ask questions about suicidality during mental health or physical health screening. If you notice any of these symptoms, seek help as soon as possible.

MORE INFO: WWW.PMHP.ZA.ORG