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EARLY PHASES OF MENTAL DISORDERS IN ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD

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Suicide is one of the leading causes of mortality among adolescent suicides. Data from the WHO European Multicentre study on attempted suicide indicates that rates of attempted suicide and suicide in the young co-vary. The association is strongest and significant for male adolescents and young adults. Furthermore, recent studies have reported a shift to suicide methods with higher lethality for both genders.

Suicide prevention strategies are directed at the general population and health care services. Suicide risk is high among adolescents with psychiatric illness, so adequate treatment and detection of psychiatric illnesses in young people is essential. Preventive measures in health care services after a suicide attempt and early recognition of young people at risk in schools are also essential strategies.

The emphasis of suicide prevention work needs to shift to an earlier stage of the suicidal process. This question is addressed by the global suicide prevention initiative SUPRE (SUicide PREvention), in the WHO publication Preventing suicide: a resource for teachers and other school staff, which can be adapted to local conditions and inserted in syllabuses for training both pupils and staff. An intervention project called SAYLE: Saving Young lives in Europe is funded by the EU for adolescents in European schools over 12 EU countries. Its main objectives are to lead adolescents to better health through decreased risk taking and suicidal behaviours. Outcomes of preventive programs will be evaluated and culturally adjusted models for promoting health of adolescents in different European countries are planned to be developed.