

# Suicide risk for seniors moving into residential homes

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"While a move can represent a positive change, all moves involve some degree of loss," say Carol Podgorski from the University of Rochester in New York and colleagues in an article published this week in *PLoS Medicine*, and this can lead to heightened risk for suicidal behavior.

Whether by choice or necessity, more [older adults](#) are now living in residential homes. And while the residences themselves are designed to be appealing, the underlying reasons that precipitate moving into a residential home, as well as the ensuing adjustment process, often result in stress that can sometimes lead to [suicidal behavior](#). Dr. Podgorski and colleagues lay out risk factors for suicidal behavior in older adults living in residential communities including [social factors](#) (widowing, divorce, [substance abuse](#), loss, and family discord) and medical factors such as increased physical and psychotic illnesses.

The authors suggest ways that public health systems and residential communities can counter suicidal behavior in older adults living within communal accommodation: "The public health approach to suicide is consistent with theories of aging in that it calls for actions that aim to mitigate the multiple, cumulative losses for which older adults are at increased risk." The authors conclude that "there is no single blueprint for a suicide prevention plan. It is incumbent upon each facility to assess its own characteristics and resident populations and to use that information to set priorities and establish relevant goals."

**More information:** Podgorski CA, Langford L, Pearson JL, Conwell

Y (2010) Suicide Prevention for Older Adults in Residential Communities: Implications for Policy and Practice. PLoS Med 7(5): e1000254. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000254](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000254)

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