Prevalence:

- The elderly (ages 65 and older) made up 13.1% of the population; they accounted for 13.5% of all suicides in the US.
- The rate of suicides for the elderly for 2011 was 15.01 per 100,000.
- There was one elderly suicide every 96 minutes. There were about 15 suicides each day resulting in 5,353 suicides in among those 65 and older.
- Elderly white men were at the highest risk with a rate of approximately 32.12 suicides per 100,000 each year.
- White men over the age of 85, who are labeled "old-old", were at the greatest risk of all age-gender-race groups. In 2011, the suicide rate for these men was 47.60 per 100,00. That was 2.07 times the current rate for men of all ages (22.99 per 100,000).
- 83.5% of elderly suicides were male; the rate of male suicides in late life was about 5.25 time greater than female suicides.
- The suicide rate for the elderly reached a peak in 1987 at 21.8 per 100,000 people.
- The rate of suicide for women typically declines after age 60 (after peaking in the middle adulthood, ages 45-49).
- Although older adults attempt suicide less often than those in other age groups, they have a higher completion rate. For all ages combined, there is an estimated 1 suicide for every 100-200 attempts. Over the age of 65, there is 1 estimated for every 4 attempted suicides.
- Firearms were the most common means (71.6%) used for completing suicide among the elderly. Men use firearms more often than women.
- Alcohol or substance abuse plays a diminishing role in later life suicides compared to younger suicides.
- One of the leading causes of suicide among the elderly is depression, often undiagnosed and/or untreated.

Common Risk Factors:

- The act of completing suicide is rarely preceded by only one cause or one reason. Common risk factors include:
  - The recent death of a loved one
  - Physical illness
  - Uncontrollable pain or the fear of a prolonged illness
  - Perceived poor health
  - Social isolation and loneliness
  - Major changes in social roles (e.g. retirement)

Sources:

The information for this fact sheet was gathered from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCOPC) website (http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/default.html) operated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).