

Alcohol & Suicide Walk & Talk

The walk from the waiting room to the exam room is an opportunity for medical assistants to informally check-in with their patients and offer gentle reminders. The following script can be used during this “walk and talk” time.

Background: In 2020, nearly 46,000 Americans lost their lives to suicide and over 1/3 of them were found to have alcohol in their system. Alcohol can increase suicide risk by lowering inhibition, while simultaneously increasing depressive symptoms, impaired judgment, and impulsivity. This card educates patients on the link between alcohol use and suicide risk and provides resources.

Medical Assistant: *calls patient from waiting room*

Patient: *walks back to the hallway*

Medical Assistant: *Hi! How are you?*

Patient: “Fine, thanks. You?”

Medical Assistant: “Good! We are sharing this card with all of our patients to educate patients on the connection between alcohol use and suicide risk since it is [e.g. suicide awareness month (September), alcohol awareness month (April), mental health awareness month (May)]. Alcohol can lower inhibition while simultaneously increasing depressive symptoms, impaired judgment, and impulsivity. There are some resources on the back of the card that are good to have on hand, including the new 988 suicide and crisis hotline. If you have any questions about this, the doctor will be happy to discuss them with you.” *hands postcard with graphic to patient*

Patient: “Oh, okay. Thanks.”

Medical Assistant: “You’re welcome.”



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