

Self-harm

Understanding and support

Self-harming is hurting yourself on purpose so you bleed, leave a scar, mark, bruise or take an overdose. The most common ways to self-harm are cutting, scratching, hair pulling and burning. Some may use drugs or alcohol as a form of self-harm. Girls are thought to be more likely to self-harm than boys, but this is because boys are more likely to punch out at walls, which isn't always recognised as self-harm.

People self-harm for different reasons. Some people feel bad because they're being bullied or abused, some may be stressed or are suffering a loss or maybe missing someone.

“Self-harming is dangerous. It is a sign that you have an underlying problem and if it got out of hand, you could risk killing yourself accidentally. Get help as soon as possible.”

You may feel powerless right now but once you have talked it through you can work towards understanding why you are self-harming and how to go about working through this difficult time.

What to do

If you are self-harming:

- You are not on your own, so don't suffer alone! Don't bottle it up, go and speak to someone you trust.
- Contact your GP.
- Keep a record of how you feel when you want to self-harm.
- Keep wounds clean or they may become infected, seek medical attention if necessary.

If a friend is self-harming:

- Listen to them and let them talk about how they feel.
- It might help them if they know you're there for them.
- Encourage them to see their GP who will be able to get them some counselling. This will help them talk about why they self-harm.
- Visit websites and contacts for support.

Who can help

If you are self-harming, there is help available and it is important to get the support you need.

Many young people who self-harm do so privately and do not want to talk to other people about it, sometimes for fear of how people will react, thinking that they might not understand.

“If you can talk to someone, this may help how you are feeling.”

If you don't want to talk to your parents or carer, you could talk to your grandparents, another relative, friend, school nurse, youth worker or teacher or if you don't feel like you can confide in anyone, then go and talk to your GP.