

Self-Harm

Information Sheet

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is any behaviour such as self-cutting, swallowing objects, taking an overdose, self-strangulation or running in front of a car where the intent is deliberately to cause self-harm. Some people who self-harm can have a strong desire to kill themselves.

Why do children and young people self-harm?

Children and young people may self-harm for a variety of reasons such as the following:

- A difficult family life that includes poor parental relationships, abuse, neglect or rejection
- A psychological condition such as an eating disorder, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem or personality disorder
- Emotional difficulties such as relationship problems, peer pressure, being bullied.

Signs of self-harm

There may be a change in behaviour of the child or young person that is associated with self-harm such as:

- Mood swings
- Becoming withdrawn and isolation from family and friends
- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Poor attendance at school and lowering of grades
- Abusing drugs or alcohol

Examples of self-harm

Some types of self-harm include:

- Cutting
- Scratching
- Taking an overdose
- Swallowing hazardous substances
- Burning
- Over or under medicating
- Punching, hitting, bruising
- Over or under eating
- Risky sexual behaviour

Who to contact

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0300 123 3393

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0808 800 5000

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