

Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence

Information for the public

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Self-harm: the care you should expect

Self-harm is when someone damages or injures their body on purpose, including taking an overdose of medication or other substances. People of all ages may self-harm, but recently, more young people have been self-harming than before. Some people may only harm themselves once, but around a fifth (20%) of people self-harm again within a year. Most people do not go to hospital after they have self-harmed, but those who do may be at even higher risk of repeat self-harm and suicide.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people who self-harm, as well as their friends and families, by making sure:

- they are treated with kindness, dignity and respect
- they always feel listened to and supported
- they have the information and support they need, and that they can easily read and understand the information they receive
- they are treated and supported at the right time, in the right place, by the right professional
- they know who to contact in an emergency or if they have worries or problems at any time
- they have a detailed assessment so they get the care and support they need
- everyone working with people who self-harm has the training to provide the best support and therapy for people who self-harm.

The guideline is for all staff who care for and support people who self-harm, for example, GP surgeries, ambulance staff and hospitals, as well as schools and universities, social care and custodial settings.

Making decisions together

Decisions about care are best when they are made together. Your health and care professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any support or therapy?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or issues that worry you more than others?
- How will the support and therapy affect your day-to-day life?
- What improvements can you expect?

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your health or care professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about self-harm.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Battle Scars](#)
- [Harmless](#)
- [Self injury Support](#), Helpline: 0808 800 8088 and textline: 07537 432444 (Mondays and Thursdays, 7pm to 10pm)
- [YoungMinds](#), Young person's textline 85258; Parents' helpline 0808 802 5544.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by self-harm and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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