



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

HUMAN SERVICE CENTER - FSUS LOCATION

MENTAL HEALTH INFO FOR PARENTS:

SELF-HARM & CUTTING

How it affects your child and how you can help

What are self-harm and cutting?

Cutting is the most common method of self-injury and is often done repeatedly (not just once).

Generally, cutting is done with sharp objects, such as razors knives, pins/needles, sharp stones, and broken glass. However, when these types of items aren't available, individuals will use other objects/methods to break skin:

- Pencil erasers (through hard rubbing)
- Deep scratching (which draws blood)
- Pinching
- Skin burning
- Punching oneself
- Biting oneself
- Head banging

About Cutting

Cutting affects many teens and preteens. It may be an attempt to interrupt strong emotions and pressures that seem impossible to tolerate. Most of the time, cutting is not a suicide attempt.

Stats

Research indicates that self-harm occurs in as many as **15%** of teens. The most common methods are skin cutting (**70-90%**), head banging or hitting (**21%-44%**), and burning (**15%-35%**).



Common cut sites on the body include:

- Arms
- Wrists
- Ankles
- Lower legs
- Abdomen
- Inner thighs
- Feet
- Genitals
- Under the arms
- Under the breasts

Cutting and the marks it leaves are usually kept well-hidden so the behavior can continue without interference.

What Parents Can Do

Parents can help teens who cut — and the earlier, the better. Cutting can be habit-forming, and sadly, many people underestimate the risks of getting seriously sick or hurt that go along with it. You can help by:

- Coping with your own feelings
- Learning about cutting
- Finding professional help
- Being there to love and believe in your child
- Talking with your child
- Staying positive
- Providing calm, steady support

For more information, you can visit:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/help-cutting.html>

<https://www.myteam.org/how-to-talk-to-your-teen-about-self-harm>

<https://themighty.com/2016/06/tips-for-parents-when-your-child-self-harms/>

https://www.suicideinfo.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Helping-Children-and-Youth-with-Self-Harm-Behaviours_oa.pdf

<https://childmind.org/article/what-drives-self-injury-and-how-to-treat-it/>

<https://www.mhanational.org/conditions/self-injury-cutting-self-harm-or-self-mutilation>

<https://www.crisistextline.org/selfharm> (Crisis text line information)