

## **Mental Health Information for Parents from FSUS**

# **SELF-HARM & 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.

## **Facts**

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%**).



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### Common cut sites on the body include:

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

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

### Resources

- **Crisis Textline:** <https://www.crisistextline.org/topics/self-harm/>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/help-cutting.html>
- <https://www.myteam.org/how-to-talk-to-your-teen-about-self-harm>
- <https://themighty.com/topic/self-harm/tips-for-parents-when-your-child-self-harms/>
- <https://www.cheo.on.ca/en/resources-and-support/resources/P4926E.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>