

Emergency Department

Patient Information Sheets

Self Harm

Advice for friends, family and carers

Finding that a person you care for is harming themselves can bring about a range of emotions, from fear, distress and confusion to worry, anger, anxiety and blame.

Things you can do to help:

- give the person the option of talking
- ensure there is someone to talk to even if it is not you
- try to be understanding
- recommend they talk to their GP/practice nurse or contact a helpline
- encourage the use of distraction techniques.

Seeking medical help

Contact NHS direct to speak to a trained professional who will advise what action to take.
In an emergency call 999 and ask for an ambulance.

The organisations listed overleaf provide support and information to both self harm sufferers and those who care for them.

Self harm

Self harm is the term used when someone deliberately hurts themselves. People may do this in a number of ways, including:

- cutting or scratching
- burning with a flame or something hot
- causing bruising to the body by hitting
- throwing the body against something that will hurt
- taking overdoses of medication
- hair pulling (also known as trichotillomania).

Self harm is a coping strategy that helps some people to manage their emotional hurt or stress. Many people who harm themselves are struggling with intolerable distress or unbearable situations such as:

- abuse
- relationship difficulties
- feeling depressed
- grief
- unemployment
- problems at work or school.

Why do people self harm?

People tend to self harm to:

- release tension, frustration and distress
- regain a feeling of control
- distract from inner pain
- punish themselves and relieve guilt.

Who self harms?

Everyone is at risk of self harming at some point in their lives but some people are more vulnerable than others. Things that can make you more vulnerable include a stressful life situation, childhood abuse, mental health problems or personality difficulties. This does not mean that everyone who self-harms has these problems or that everyone with these problems self-harm.

How can I help myself?

The urge to self harm may go away after a while. You can:

- talk to your GP or practice nurse
- use distraction techniques from the list below
- reduce your stress by relaxing and focussing your mind on something else
- talk to someone about how you are feeling
- go out if the person you are with makes you feel worse.

Distraction techniques

- snap an elastic band on your wrist
- squeeze ice cubes
- eat a hot chilli
- take a cold shower
- scream as loud as you can
- go for a walk/run/swim and spend some energy
- write a to-do list
- watch your favourite film
- watch the clouds or stars.

Contacts

NHS direct

0845 4647 (24 hours)

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

The Samaritans

08457 90 90 90 (24 hours)

www.samaritans.org.uk

National Self Harm Network (NSHN)

0800 622 6000

(Thurs-Sat 7-11pm, Sun 6-10.30pm)

Support@nshn.co.uk

Worcestershire Carers Unit

0800 389 2896

carers@worcestershire.gov.uk

Harmless

Support organisation for self-harm sufferers

www.harmless.org.uk

Bristol Crisis Service for Women

National organisation that supports women in emotional distress

www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.

For additional medical advice, if your symptoms or condition worsens:

Contact your GP

NHS 111:

Get help with your symptoms, NHS111:

Information to help you manage your health:

Telephone 111

<https://111.nhs.uk/>

www.nhs.uk

In an emergency telephone 999

Emergency Department (A&E)
Alexandra Hospital
Woodrow Drive
Redditch B98 7UB

Tel: 01527 512030

Minor Injury Unit
Kidderminster Hospital
Bewdley Road
Kidderminster DY11 6RJ

Tel: 01562 513039

Emergency Department (A&E)
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester WR5 1DD

Tel: 01905 760743