

Self-Harm and Wisconsin's Youth



Self-harm rates among youth 10-19 years old are more than double the statewide rates.¹

What is self-harm?

Self-harm refers to intentional actions taken to hurt oneself, often to express or dull emotional pain. Young people who self-harm may or may not have the intention to die by suicide, but it does put them at greater risk for repeated self-harm, suicide attempt, or death by suicide.

How are youth self-harming?

The most common method of self-harm among youth ages 10-19 is by drug poisoning.¹ This includes legal, illegal, prescription, and/or over-the-counter drugs.

Who is self-harming?

- Among adolescents, girls make up 80% of emergency and hospital patients with self-harm injuries.¹
- 15 to 17 year-olds have the highest rate of self-harm among the 10-19 age group.¹



Black and American Indian youth have higher rates of self-harm.¹ Though health care data do not explain the cause of these disparities, health outcomes are influenced

by social and historical factors including discrimination and systemic under-resourcing of communities of color. Discriminatory practices, both individual and societal, harm health and well-being.

Though health care data does not include LGBTQ+ identification, LGBTQ+ youth report higher rates of self-harm.² These higher rates of self-harm can also be linked to discriminatory practices that negatively impact stress, health, and access to care.

When is self-harm occurring?



When students return to school in the fall and after winter break, there are increases in self-harm injuries among Wisconsin youth.³ These injuries decrease in June after school lets out. This pattern may point to added stress related to the school year and may suggest timing for targeted interventions.

Parents, guardians, teachers, mentors, coaches, and others should be alerted to circumstances that may increase emotional distress among young people. Check in with youth about how they are managing stress and help them develop healthy coping skills.



Learn more about self-harm prevention at dhs.wisconsin.gov/injury-prevention/self-harm.htm



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Know the risk factors and warning signs

Risk factors make it more likely that someone will consider or attempt self-harm. The existence of one or more of these risk factors does not necessarily mean someone will intentionally harm themselves. Rather, these risk factors should signal a need for additional support for these young people.



Risk factors

- Mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, and diagnosed conditions.
- Bullying (as a victim or a perpetrator).
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) like violence, abuse, or growing up in a family with mental health or substance use issues.
- Lack of sleep.
- Substance use.
- Low self-esteem.
- Excessive screen time and social media usage, which can interfere with sleep and can contribute to feelings of low self-esteem and self-worth.



Warning signs

- Increased secrecy.
- Changes in mood and behavior and emotional withdrawal.
- Unexplained cuts, burns, or bruises. These typically occur on the arms, legs, and stomach.
- Finding razors, sharps, knives, or other items that may be used to self-injure.
- Withdrawal from friends and family.
- Wearing clothing that doesn't quite match the weather. For example, wearing long sleeves in summer to cover self-inflicted injuries to the arm.



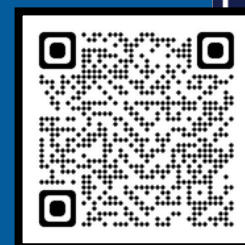
Tools to help young people who are self-harming

- Guidance for family, friends, and educators on how to help a young person who is self-harming is available through the [DHS's self-harm page](#).
- Training for parents and guardians of teen youth on how to recognize signs of depression, initiate a conversation, and get help is available through [More than Sad](#) from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (English and Spanish).

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides 24/7 connection to confidential support.

Call or text 988,
or chat via
988lifeline.org.



988
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