



North Central Health Care

Person centered. Outcome focused.

## 6 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SELF INJURY

**For Non-Suicidal Self Injury:**

### 1. It is not done to get attention or be dramatic.

Individuals that hurt themselves often try to hide their behaviors, because they are ashamed. These behaviors are most often used as a method to handle stress, and not because these individuals want more attention.

### 2. People often do it to relieve stress or discomfort.

Individuals that hurt themselves have said that it helps them to obtain relief from negative feelings, and other forms of stress. In addition to this, individuals say that this is a way to have control over their body when they cannot control other parts of their life. People who self-injure commonly report they feel empty inside, over or under stimulated, unable to express their feelings, lonely, not understood by others and fearful of intimate relationships and adult responsibilities. Self-injury is their way to cope with or relieve painful or hard-to-express feelings, and is generally not a suicide attempt. But relief is temporary, and a self-destructive cycle often develops without proper treatment. Self-injury can also be a way to have control over your body when you can't control anything else in your life. A lot of people who cut themselves also have an eating disorder.

### 3. There are various types.

Skin cutting is the most common form of nonsuicidal self-injury, but it is not the only one. Head banging, hitting, and burning are also examples of NSSIs, and most individuals who participate in nonsuicidal self-injury use multiple methods.

### 4. Viewing content online about self-harm can be a trigger for offline behavior.

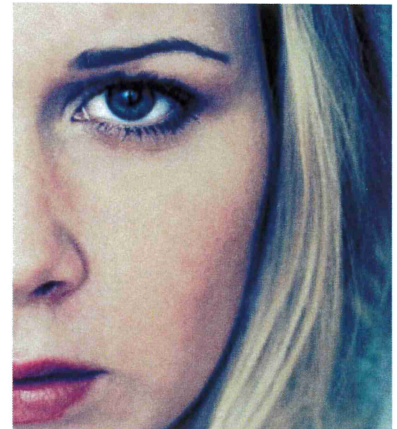
Research suggests that viewing content about self-harm, particularly on social media, can encourage individuals to replicate the behavior, if they have had a problem with it in the past. Indeed, research indicates that youth that visit these websites are 11 times more likely to have thoughts about hurting themselves.

### 5. Self-harming individuals often try to hide their behaviors.

Individuals that self-harm often suffer from shame because of their behaviors, and they try to hide them. For this reason, it can be difficult to determine whether or not someone is participating in self-harming behaviors. Some signs that someone may be self-harming are: (1) unexplained cuts, bruising, scars, healing or healed wounds, (2) stories that may explain one, but not all, physical injuries (i.e., "The cat scratched me."), (3) constantly wearing wristbands, watchbands, or large bracelets, and (4) frequent bandages or other methods of covering wounds.

### 6. Treatment most often involves therapy and/or medication.

Since self-harming behaviors are most often used to cope with feelings or stress, therapy is used to help these individuals develop better ways to deal with these feelings. Medication is sometimes used either separately or in addition to therapy, in order to help reduce obsessive thoughts and behaviors, and to improve mood.



### How Common is Self-Injury?

Research indicates that self-injury occurs in approximately as many as 4% of adults in the United States. Rates are higher among adolescents, who seem to be at an increased risk for self-injury, with approximately 15% of teens reporting some form of self-injury. Studies show an even higher risk for self-injury among college students, with rates ranging from 17%-35%.

If you would like to speak with a therapist or counselor about any mental concerns, please call

North Central Health Care  
Outpatient Services at  
715.848.4600

[www.norcen.org](http://www.norcen.org)

### Warning Signs

- Warning signs that someone may be injuring themselves include:
- Unexplained frequent injuries including cuts and burns,
- Low self-esteem,
- Difficulty handling feelings,
- Relationship problems or avoidance of relationships, and
- Poor functioning at work, school or home.

People who self-injure may attempt to conceal their marks, such as bruises, scabs or scars with clothing, and you may notice them wearing inappropriate clothing like long sleeves and pants in hot weather. If discovered, a person who self-injures may often make excuses as to how an injury happened (for instance, "I fell" or "The cat scratched me").

**North Central Health Care Crisis Center – Emergency Help Available 24/7**  
No Appointment Necessary - Walk-In Crisis Center - 1100 Lake View Drive, Wausau  
**1.800.799.0122 or 715.845.4326 Crisis & Suicide Prevention Hotline**