

SELF-INJURY WARNING SIGNS

Individuals who self-injure are often very careful to hide it from others. They may feel shame and fear judgemental reactions. Sometimes an individual will recognize that there is a problem and seek help, but more often parents/caregivers/friends will detect that something is wrong.

Warning Signs

- Frequent injuries (e.g., cuts, bruises, burns) with suspicious explanations.
- Wearing more clothing than would be expected, such as pants and long sleeves in warm weather (to cover injuries).
- Wearing bangles, bracelets and wristbands (to cover injuries).
- Difficulty handling emotions, easily overwhelmed.
- Extremely sensitive to rejection.
- Self-defeating comments and attitude.
- Avoiding sports or other activities that would require showing more of one's body.
- The presence of behaviours that often accompany self-injury: eating disorders, drug/alcohol misuse, excessive risk-taking.
- Noticing references to self-injury in an individual's writing, journals or art projects.
- Discovery of tools used for self-injury (e.g., broken disposable razors, lighters, un-bent paper clips).
- Bloodied wads of tissue or toilet paper, blood on towels or clothing.
- First aid supplies being used quickly.
- Rubbing arms, especially wrists, through sleeves (cuts often itch while they are healing).
- Withdrawing from activities once enjoyed.
- Increased time alone.
- Increased time with peers who self-injure.