



Visiting your GP after self harm or suicidal thoughts

Going to see your GP about self-harm or to disclose suicidal thoughts can be terrifying, but it can be one of the most helpful steps you can take in your road to recovery. It's perfectly normal that you might not know what to tell them and to be worried about their reaction.

Remember that most GPs will have experience in treating people with mental health problems. It's likely that you're not the first person to go to them about self-harm or suicidal thoughts, so you needn't worry that they won't understand you.

Before your appointment

If you've taken the step to make an appointment with your GP to discuss self-harm, you've already done one of the most difficult parts of getting help. When you call your GP surgery, the receptionist might ask you what your appointment is about. Although you don't have to tell them what the issue is, doing so can help prepare the doctor to expect the call to be about mental health issues.



Before you book the appointment, it might be worth asking if one of the GPs has a special interest in mental health.



Remember you can book a double appointment if you feel you will need more time.



You can bring a friend, a family member, or anyone who can support you, with you to the appointment.

During your appointment

The next step is to make the most of your GP appointment, to help them accurately assess what level of help you need. It's likely that they'll ask you some questions to help guide the consultation, such as:



How do you self-harm?
Where and how often?
When did you start self-harming?
What triggers it?
Have you had any suicidal thoughts?
Have you made any plans to commit suicide?

It is important to be honest and to know that what you discuss with your GP is confidential. There might however be cases where your GP has to share information with other health professionals to get you the help that you need. Also, if they feel that you are at risk to yourself or others, then they have a duty to share the information with other professionals as necessary to keep you and others safe from harm.

The GP will discuss with you starting a treatment plan which may include talking therapy and/or medication and is likely to refer you to the local mental health services for further support.

After your appointment

If you require urgent help, then you will be seen quickly by the mental health services. However, if you are not assessed as being at immediate risk then referral to the mental health services can take time. However, there is lots of support you can access whilst waiting. Please see the bottom of this guidance for links to some resources that might help.

Your GP should follow you up after a couple of weeks to check all is ok, and you can contact them at any time if you are feeling worse or struggling.

childline.org.uk

Childline is a counselling service for young people up to their 19th birthday in the United Kingdom provided by the NSPCC.

chathealth.nhs.uk

ChatHealth is a confidential text messaging service that enables children and young people (aged 11-19) in Dorset to send questions via text message to their school nursing team.

kooth.com

Kooth is a free online counselling and emotional wellbeing support service providing young people aged 11-25 years

