

## Help for Self-Injury in the Montreal area

### Youth-Oriented:

- *Douglas Hospital Adolescent Clinic:*  
514-761-6131  
**Ext: 7470**  
**\*Referral needed** (call your local CLSC first. Dial 811 to find your local CLSC)
- *Montreal Children's Hospital - Psychiatry:*  
**514-412-4449**  
**\*Referral needed**
- *Head and Hands:* **514-481-0277**  
www.headandhands.ca
- *Herzl Family Practice Center – Adolescent Clinic:* **514-340-8242**
- *Kids Help Phone:* **1-800-668-6868**  
www.kidshelpphone.ca

### General:

- *Emotional Health CBT Clinic:*  
**514-485-7772**  
www.cbtclinic.ca/treatment
- *PsyMontreal:* **514-337-2473 Ext. 0**  
www.psymontreal.com/
- *Tel-aide:* **514-935-1101**  
www.telaide.org

## To Learn More

### Websites:

- [www.amiquebec.org/self-injury/](http://www.amiquebec.org/self-injury/)  
Resources for self-injury
- [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/self\\_injury.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/self_injury.htm)  
Help guide for self-injury
- [http://www.cmha.ca/mental\\_health/youth-and-self-injury/#.U7byDygx85Q](http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/youth-and-self-injury/#.U7byDygx85Q)  
Symptoms, causes, and treatment of self-injury
- [http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/content/assets/PDF/publications/truth\\_about\\_self\\_harm.pdf](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/content/assets/PDF/publications/truth_about_self_harm.pdf)  
Information for youth, friends, and family

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AMI-Québec has many programs to help families and people suffering from mental illness. If you recognize yourself or someone you care about in this pamphlet, please contact us and we will direct you to an appropriate resource.

(514) 486-1448

www.amiquebec.org

outreach@amiquebec.org

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# SELF-INJURY



## AMI-QUÉBEC Action on Mental Illness

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*Kayla had recently moved to a new town. The move was stressful, and she was having difficulty adjusting to her new life. Her sister was away at university, and her parents were busy with the move and their new jobs. Kayla felt overwhelmed and alone, and she felt her emotions gnawing her insides. She began to cut herself when she felt overwhelmed. She had read forum posts online about people who would self-harm, and wanted to see if it was something that could help her. At first she felt she was in control, that it was the only way she could cope, but as she cut herself more she began to feel like she wouldn't be able to stop. It became a necessity for her. As time went on she began to feel ashamed. She became terrified about what she could do to herself, so she went to see her school's guidance counselor. He seemed to understand what Kayla was going through, and referred her to a therapist to work on things such as triggers, new and more healthy ways of coping, and ways in which to express herself in order to heal.*

## WHAT IS SELF-INJURY?

Self-injury, also known as self-harm, is the act of purposefully hurting oneself without the intention of suicide. Common forms of self-injury include cutting skin, burning skin, hitting oneself to the point of injury, and preventing wounds from healing. Although self-injury is not considered a mental illness, it may be a sign of a mental health problem. In fact, harming oneself can be an early indication of suicidal tendencies. Self-injury may also signal a need for care and support.

Self-injury can affect anyone, but is typically more prevalent in teenagers and

females. People self-injure for many reasons. A person may purposely harm themselves in order to:

- Cope with anxiety or depression
- Cope with loss, trauma, violence
- Punish themselves
- Turn emotional pain into physical pain
- Counter feelings of numbness/emptiness

## WARNING SIGNS

People often keep their self-injury behaviors hidden because they feel ashamed or embarrassed. **Warning signs** include:

- Unexplained and frequent injuries such as cuts, burns, or scars
- Wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirts all the time, even in warm weather
- Low self-esteem
- Spending a lot of time alone
- Mood changes (depression, anxiety)
- Problems with relationships

## WHY DO PEOPLE SELF-HARM?

- To punish themselves
- They feel a sense of control
- By harming themselves, they create a reason to care for themselves (mending their wounds)
- Allows them to make emotions that feel invisible into something that is visible
- As a way of telling others that they are going through severe distress

## HOW TO TALK TO SOMEONE WHO SELF-HARMS?

- Talk to them about what you have noticed and let them know that you care and are concerned about them

- Be supportive and offer to talk to them about what they are going through; even if you don't understand, you can still show them they have your support
- Do not focus on how to stop the self-injuring, but rather encourage them to seek help so they can find healthier ways to cope
- If you think they might be in danger, it is okay to ask for help from someone you trust, like a parent or school counselor

## TREATMENT

If you are injuring yourself, have thoughts about harming yourself, or know someone who is injuring themselves, it is important to seek help. When it comes to self-injury, counseling and therapy have been shown to be very effective. Also, treating an underlying mental illness can help someone to stop self-injuring by learning new coping skills like stress management and acceptance.

## GETTING HELP

If you or someone you know shows signs of self-injury then it is important to get help. ***The sooner self-injury is treated, the better the outcome.*** Telling friends is not enough. It is important to **talk with an adult whom you trust**: a parent, guidance counselor, social worker, coach, or teacher. You can also visit a family doctor or CLSC and explain what you are experiencing.