

# Parasuicide: Understanding and awareness

## Understanding parasuicide



Parasuicide refers to **non-fatal acts of self-harm or self-injury** that are intentional but not necessarily with suicidal intent. This definition is not universal. Some studies often use the term "suicide attempt." In other studies, suicide attempt applies only when suicide was the individual's clear intent or when the individual's behaviour had a high likelihood of death.

The term parasuicide was created in an attempt to bring clarity to this situation and was intended to serve as a **broader term describing all nonfatal self-injurious behaviour with no clear intent to cause bodily harm or death**, thereby reserving "attempted suicide" for situations in which intent is known.

## What is parasuicide?

Parasuicide is an **umbrella term for a number of self-harm or self-injury behaviours** such as cutting, burning, or overdosing on medication, which are often seen as a way for individuals to cope with emotional distress or communicate their inner pain. Parasuicide behaviour can also include the misuse of drugs and alcohol and acts of reckless behaviour.

Parasuicide is usually a way for someone to relieve the **build-up and pressure of distressing thoughts and feelings**. It can give that person a distraction or temporary relief from the emotional pain they are feeling.



## The facts

Individuals who engage in repetitive parasuicidal behaviour are **more likely to accidentally take their own lives** as a result of the parasuicidal behaviour. They are also **more likely to develop an intent to take their own life**. Research has also shown that there is a **higher prevalence of parasuicidal behaviours among females compared to males**.



## *What to do if you're worried about someone*

If you are worried that someone you know is engaging in parasuicidal behaviour please **encourage them to seek help**. It is important for them to speak to a professional about their feelings and behaviours. The first step is going to the **GP or a mental health professional**.

If you are **very worried** about their behaviour in the moment, **take them to A&E** to ensure their self-harm is not fatal and they receive medical care for their injuries.