

4. Watch for redness or heat spreading outward from the wound - these may be signs of INFECTION. If you have redness or if you have a fever - SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

5. Drink lots of fluids to make up for any blood you've lost

ALTERNATIVES TO SLASHING

If you decide you want to try something different, you could try one of the following, which produce intense sensations similar to the feeling of slashing:

- Squeeze hard on a piece of ice or scream into your pillow
- Have protected sex
- Cut up pieces of paper or cardboard
- Use a red marker instead of a razor
- Rub the bristles of a toothbrush on your skin
- Rub an ice cube on your wrist
- Wrap an elastic band around your wrist and snap it against your wrist

Art and writing are also wonderful ways to express your inner feelings. Through art and writing you may be able to understand your need to injure better. This will help you to make choices and look after yourself.

TAKING CARE of your BODY & MIND

a guide to safer cutting by
Prisoners with HIV/AIDS Support Action Network

DO YOU HARM YOURSELF?

You're NOT the only one. You have NOTHING to be ashamed of. Hurting oneself through slashing, cutting, burning, or other means is a way of coping with pain, fear, and anxiety. If you are hurting yourself, you want to make sure you do it as safely as possible to avoid any long-term damage. This information may be helpful to read before you slash yourself. Try to read all the information before you slash so you are the best informed you can be.

TIPS FOR SLASHING SAFELY

The most important thing to remember is: Do NOT judge yourself or devalue yourself. Right now cutting may be the only way you know of coping. Try not to beat yourself up or expect yourself not to feel the way you do, or snap out of it. You are trying to take care of yourself.

1. If there is someone you trust, let them know you're cutting, or have them with you when you cut

2. Think about whether you want others to see your cuts. If you don't want others to see for fear of judgment or punishment, then cut yourself in places that are easy to hide with clothing.

3. Make sure your instrument is as clean as possible to prevent infection - use bleach if it is available, although it is NOT 100% effective as a disinfectant. If bleach is not available, clean the site and the sharp with hot soapy water - although this will NOT stop the spread of Hepatitis C, it is better than not cleaning at all.

4. Don't share cutting instruments. You can spread diseases like Hepatitis C by sharing instruments.

5. ALWAYS cut slowly. Think of a creative way to project your pain into the cutting.

6. Try not to cut too deep and don't cut on major veins.

7. Do only the minimum needed to ease your distress. Set limits for yourself. Decide how much you are going to allow yourself to do, and keep within those limits.

8. Clean up and bandage yourself right away.

YOU MAY NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

Your body goes into SHOCK. Severe cuts can cause the body to go into shock, which basically means the body starts to shut down. If UNTREATED, shock can kill you.

SIGNS THAT YOU'RE IN SHOCK

- Restlessness or Irritability
- Dizziness, Feeling faint, Nausea
- Pale, Clammy, or Moist skin
- Rapid breathing
- Rapid Pulse

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU'RE IN SHOCK

- Lie down
- Control external bleeding
- Ensure your body temperature is stable - if you're cold then put a blanket around you or something to warm you
- Unless you've injured your head, neck, or back, or have broken bones, raise your legs about 12 inches - you could rest them on a folded pillow while you're lying down
- Don't raise your head
- Don't eat or drink, even though you may be thirsty
- SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY

IF YOU CAN'T STOP THE BLEEDING

1. Try pressing cloths or paper towels (maxi pads make good bandages) directly on top of the wound
2. On top of the cloth or paper towel, place a large object - like a balled-up sock - and wrap entire thing tightly in a bandage
3. Keep the wound above the level of your heart and check it 10 minutes later. DON'T LOOK BEFORE THE 10 MINUTES IS UP - if the blood soaks through the cloth/bandage before the 10 minutes is up, just put another cloth/bandage on top of it
4. If after 10 minutes, it's still bleeding - re-wrap and SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

AFTER YOU STOP THE BLEEDING

1. Place a cold pack on the wound for 10 minutes
2. Then wash the wound with a disinfectant and apply antibiotic ointment and a bandage
3. Change the bandage TWICE a day