

Avon and Wiltshire 
Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

Royal United Hospital Bath 
NHS Trust



Information

Following an **Overdose**

Sarah took an overdose in May, a few weeks before her finals. She had always done very well academically, but the strain of exams, plus coping with a traumatic relationship was just too much. She'd seen her GP a couple of weeks before because she was scared of her own feelings. "She told me to take paracetamols until my exams were over. She wasn't interested in listening to how I was feeling. One day it all got too much and I just snapped. I smashed up my room and then swallowed painkillers. I don't think I really wanted to die, but I just couldn't stand being alive any more. Gradually it dawned on me that I might die. I told a friend and was taken to hospital. I felt incredibly angry, frustrated and guilty."

We realise that coming to hospital after harming yourself in some way can be an extremely difficult and traumatic experience. Depending on a number of different factors, you may be admitted to one of the wards for specific treatment, or overnight observation. Occasionally, the staff may suggest that it is alright for you to go straight home from hospital, if you don't need any further treatment.

There are many factors that may make a person consider taking an overdose. Many people may be experiencing psychological problems such as depression; others may have experienced some kind of devastating personal loss or bereavement.

Attempting suicide is dangerous - it is damaging to the physical and mental senses, but it is no good telling someone to "snap out of it", especially when they have felt so bad that they have contemplated killing themselves. Here we recognise that there are often very complex reasons why someone might take an overdose - most people who do it don't want to live or die, they often want to do both at the same time. It is this exhausting

psychological effect which may make a person act impulsively and attempt suicide. Many people take an overdose because of an emotional turmoil, and they may be trying to communicate their pain and frustration through the act of overdosing.

It is difficult to say why people kill themselves, or why some people feel less able to cope than others do. When a relationship ends, most people are upset, but they don't automatically reach for a packet of tablets. Experts point to a number of 'vulnerability factors' - like someone very close to you dying, or your parents splitting up; and 'precipitating factors' - such as a row with your partner or losing your job. Any one of these may spark thoughts of suicide if you are feeling particularly low.

You may continue to feel depressed or anxious or tearful or frightened whilst you are in hospital these feelings are very common and are a reflection of how low your self-esteem can become, as well as trying to come-to-terms with the stressful event of being in hospital.

Once the medical and nursing staff have assessed what is the most appropriate treatment for you, you will be offered the chance to talk about your problems and what things may have led up to the overdose. This will be with a nurse or doctor specially trained in mental health and it will enable us to identify, with you, what help and support you may need after you leave hospital. Some options may include counselling, specific follow-up with your GP, befriending, couples therapy or a further assessment meeting with a specialist professional such as a community psychiatric nurse (CPN) or a clinical psychologist.

✦ **Your GP/family doctor**

He or she can refer you on to a range of specialist services

✦ **Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN)**

For psychiatric nursing, specialist therapy and on-going support. Please contact your GP, who can discuss with you how to get in touch with the CPN service that covers your geographical area.

Counselling Services

✦ **The Samaritans ☎ 01225 429 222 or 08457 90 90 90 (local call rate)**

A confidential telephone support and counselling service for people feeling depressed or suicidal. Operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you would like to talk to someone face-to-face the centre is open to callers between 9am and 10pm - no appointment required. Contact:
10 Newbridge Hill, Bath, BA1 3PU.

✦ **Bath MIND ☎ 01225 316 199**

Bath Mind, runs several projects in Bath for people experiencing mental ill health and their carers, these include: a Drop in, an Advocacy Service, a Befriending Service and four housing projects.

✦ **Mind in Western Wiltshire ☎ 01249 814447**

Confidential counselling and support group. Covers Bradford-on-Avon, Calne, Chippenham, Corsham, Devizes, Malmesbury, Melksham, Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury. Ring the above number to arrange an appointment or write to:
MIND in Western Wiltshire, 22 High Street, Calne, SN11 0ES.

✦ **Wessex Counselling Service** ☎ **01373 453 355**

Provides counsellors to help work through personal, marital and family difficulties. Covers Somerset, Wiltshire, Avon and Dorset. Ring the above number for more information, or write to: *Fairfield House, King St., Frome, BA11 1BH*

✦ **Relate** ☎ **01225 465 593**

Confidential counselling for adult couples and individuals with relationship problems, including sexual therapy. Daytime and evening appointments available. Ring the above number to make an appointment or write to:
21 Milsom Street, Bath, Somerset, BA1 1DE

✦ **Off The Record** ☎ **01225 335551**

Confidential advice and counselling for young people. To arrange an appointment, call the above number or write to:
Open House Centre, Manvers Street, Bath, BA1 1JW

✦ **Mosaic** ☎ **01225 461 444**

Provides advice, support, advocacy and counselling for black people and individuals from other ethnic minorities. Ring the above number or write to:
Riverside Youth & Community Centre, York Place, London Road, Bath, BA1 6AE.

✦ **Cruse Bereavement Care** ☎ **01225 465 878**

Support, advice and counselling to any bereaved person including children. Also organises a range of support and social groups. Contact the above number for more information or to arrange an appointment. You can also write to: *11-12 Laura Place, Bath, BA2 4BL.*

Services for Those Who Self-Injure

✦ **National Self-Harm Network**

A survivor-led organisation that campaigns for the rights and understanding for people who self-injure. Contact: *Louise Pembroke, PO Box 16190, London, NW1 3WW.*

✦ **SASH - Survivors of Abuse and Self-Harm**

Pen-friend network which offers support and friendship on a one-to-one basis in writing. Contact: *20 Lackmore Road, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 4PB.*

✦ **The Basement Project** ☎ **01873 856 524**

A range of low cost publications aimed at helping and supporting people who self-harm. Also publications and a newsletter 'The Forum' are available for those dealing with the effects of childhood abuse. Ring for more information or write to: *PO Box 5, Abergavenny, NP7 5XW.*

✦ **SHOUT - Self-Harm Overcome by Understanding & Tolerance**

Bi-monthly newsletter aiming to breakdown isolation and provide support for women affected by self-harm. Includes details of self-help lines, groups and resources.

✦ **Self - Injury Self Help (SISH) Group**

For women, run a twelve week course for women whom self-injure, facilitated by an experienced tutor. Covers issues of confidence building, self-esteem, anger management, stress management and assertiveness. 07788 142999

We have nurse specialists who link with the Emergency Department of the Royal United Hospital. If you are unsure of which service is right for you, or you would like to discuss how to be referred to one of the more specialist mental health services, they can be contacted by ringing 01225 825320. Alternatively, you can ask the nurse looking after you to refer you.

It is advisable to make an appointment to see your GP within one week of an overdose.

If you are unsure of anything, please feel free to ask the nurse looking after you, who will be happy to explain things. If it would be helpful to talk about what led up to your attendance at the hospital, the staff are able to offer you time to sit and talk about how you are feeling. However, if you would rather sit and have some quiet time on your own, that's fine too.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the care you have received whilst attending the hospital, please feel free to discuss these with the nurse looking after you. If you prefer, you can write to either of the following:

- ✦ The Chief Executive, Royal United Hospital, Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG.
- ✦ The Chief Executive, Avon & Western Wiltshire Mental Health Care NHS Trust, Bath
NHS House, Newbridge Hill, Bath, BA1 3QE

What We Believe

It does not matter about the origins of your self-harm or injury - here you will be treated with respect and understanding, however your injuries were caused. We will challenge any negative or blaming attitudes towards those who have taken an overdose or experience self-injury. We welcome comments and views on the service you receive whilst attending the hospital and will respond positively to suggestions for further improvements in the standard of care we provide.

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