

SELF ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS IN PRADER-WILLI SYNDROME

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Types of Self Abusive Behaviors Seen at The Children's Institute

Skin picking
Biting self
Slapping self
Picking of rectum
Pulling out toenails
Extreme nail biting
Picking surgical scars
Pulling out hair, eyebrows or eyelashes
Cutting hair inappropriately
Extreme picking around fingernails or toenails
Pulling off pieces of skin
Picking nose causing sores
Clipping or cutting nails causing bleeding
Pushing pins or tacks through skin
Picking of lips causing sores
Pulling out a permanent tooth
Pushing items in nose, ears, rectum, vagina
Rubbing eyeball and causing redness, infection
Cutting skin with knife, razor blade, paperclip or scissors
Rubbing fingers with cloth, string or other fingers
Collecting insects and allowing them to bite self
Pulling off orthodontic appliances (braces)

Where?

anywhere
privately
bed
bathroom

When?

anytime
tantrum
upset, anxious
bored

How?

self-inflicted
other items

Why?

self-stimulation
anxiety, stress
embarrass parents
substitution of desire to eat
attention-seeking

Note: Exhibition of these behaviors vary in individuals with Prader-Willi syndrome – both in numbers and severity – no one has had all – most have only a few.

Treatment

1. Ignore when picking is minor. Saying "STOP" does not help.
2. Use positive statements when possible. "Hands on the table please."
3. Involve child (or adult) in plan to decrease picking. "Would you like to try to stop picking?"
4. Try Bandages.
5. Substitute an item to "keep hands busy".
6. Encourage "clean hands" by asking child (or adult) to wash hands when bloody.
7. When picking is severe, use reward for "no picking". May use very low calorie food such as pickle, Tic-Tac.
8. Medications usually are not helpful.

Other Behaviors Reported by Families

Calling 911 police and fire department
Using credit cards
Forging checks
Threats of suicide
Homicidal behavior
Theft of money
Arson
Pulling fire alarms
Abuse of telephone
Allegation of physical/sexual abuse
Jumping out of moving car