Inflammation has been proposed to be a candidate mechanism contributing to the association between exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the risk of self-harm.\textsuperscript{1-2} In the first study of its kind, researchers in the UK have now directly studied whether inflammatory processes do indeed mediate this association. Abigail Russell and colleagues used data from >4,000 adolescents recruited to the UK population-based birth cohort study, Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC).\textsuperscript{3} They modelled the number of ACEs experienced between ages 0 and 9 years, the levels of interleukin-6 (IL-6) and c-reactive protein (CRP) (key markers of inflammation) at age 9.5 years and the number of self-harm reports at age 16 years. They confirmed that ACEs between 0-9 years were associated with an increased risk of adolescent self-harm. Furthermore, each additional ACE conferred an additional 11\% risk of self-harm at 16 years-of-age. They found no evidence, however, to support that their measures of inflammation mediated this ACE–self-harm association in their sample. The researchers propose many reasons for their result. For example, they suggest that inflammation might impact on self-harm via an altered inflammatory response to immune system challenges. Alternatively, previous studies might have detected inflammatory consequences of self-harm, rather than have detected inflammation as an antecedent to self-harm. Based on their data thus far, however, the researchers do not consider that inflammatory markers are a useful biomarker of self-harm risk in those exposed to ACEs.


**References**

