



Clinical Guideline: Depression Screening for At Risk Individuals

CLINICAL RECOMMENDATION

Depression screening is recommended for adults, including older adults and pregnant and postpartum women. Screening should be implemented with adequate systems in place to ensure accurate diagnosis, effective treatment and follow up. Screening should be performed for all adults who have not been screened previously and additionally, based on clinical judgment in consideration of risk factors, comorbid conditions and life events.

CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Assessment of Risk

In general adult populations, prevalence rates vary by sex, age, race/ethnicity, education, marital status, geographic location, and employment status. Women, young and middle-aged adults, and nonwhite persons have higher rates of depression than their counterparts, as do persons who are undereducated, previously married, or unemployed. Others who are at increased risk of developing depression include persons with chronic illnesses, other mental health disorders (including substance misuse), or a family history of psychiatric disorders.

Among older adults, risk factors include disability and poor health status related to medical illness, complicated grief, chronic sleep disturbance, loneliness, and a history of depression. However, the presence or absence of risk factors alone cannot distinguish patients with depression from those without depression.

Screening Tests

Commonly used depression screening instruments include the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) in various forms and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scales in adults, the Geriatric Depression Scale in older adults, and the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) in postpartum and pregnant women. All positive screening results should lead to additional assessment that considers severity of depression and comorbid psychological problems (e.g., anxiety, panic attacks, or substance abuse), alternate diagnoses, and medical conditions.

REFERENCES AND EXTERNAL RESOURCES:

[PHQ-9 English](#) and [PHQ-9 Spanish](#)

[Geriatric Depression Scale](#) (GDS) multiple languages versions

[Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale](#) (EPDS)

[U.S. Preventive Services Task Force – Depression Screening in Adults](#)