

## *Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)*

### **What is the PHQ-9?**

The PHQ-9 is an instrument used for screening, diagnosing, and measuring the severity of an individual's depression. The PHQ-2 would be completed first, which is a two question questionnaire that inquires about an individual's frequency of their depressed mood and their reduced ability to experience pleasure in the last 2 weeks. The PHQ-2 is a preliminary screening tool. If a patient screens high on the PHQ-2, the clinician would move onto the PHQ-9 which includes nine questions with cut points for mild, moderate, moderately severe, and severe depression to help diagnose depression.<sup>1</sup>

### **Population the Test Serves**

The PHQ-9 can be completed for any individual 12 years and older. There are alternative screening tools for special populations that are validated.<sup>2</sup> The PHQ-2/9 is part of the OASIS for home health.

### **Importance of the PHQ-9**

Screening for depression is an important part of a full examination by any health professional. It has recently been recommended by the U.S. Preventative Task Force that depression screening should be completed on any adult, including postpartum and pregnant women, and older adults.<sup>3</sup> In 2019, 19.4 million adults in the US experienced at least 1 major depressive episode which could interfere with daily functioning and increase the risk of mortality and cardiovascular events.<sup>3</sup> The use of the PHQ-9 scoring can help to determine the appropriate treatment plan for an individual.<sup>1</sup>

### **Psychometric Properties**

For older adults, the sensitivity of the PHQ-9 is 0.39-0.95 and the specificity is 0.74-0.99.<sup>4,5</sup>

### **Cut-Off Scores**

A cutoff score of 10 is typically utilized for determining depression.<sup>4</sup> Cutoff scores for the severity of depression are as follows:

**0-4 points:** none-minimal

**5-9 points:** mild depression, use clinical judgment

**10-14 points:** moderate depression

**15-19 points:** moderately severe depression

**20-27 points:** severe depression

## Resources

1. National HIV Curriculum. Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) - Mental Disorders Screening - National HIV Curriculum. Uw.edu. Published 2015. <https://www.hiv.uw.edu/page/mental-health-screening/phq-9>
2. Gov. *Administering the Patient Health Questionnaires 2 and 9 (PHQ 2 and 9) in Integrated Care Settings.*; 2016. [https://www.health.ny.gov/health\\_care/medicaid/redesign/dsrip/docs/2016-07-01\\_phq\\_2\\_and\\_9\\_clean.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/redesign/dsrip/docs/2016-07-01_phq_2_and_9_clean.pdf)
3. Recommendation: Depression and Suicide Risk in Adults: Screening | United States Preventive Services Taskforce. [www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org](http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org). Published June 20, 2023. <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/screening-depression-suicide-risk-adults>
4. Costantini L, Pasquarella C, Odone A, et al. Screening for depression in primary care with Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9): a systematic review. *Journal of Affective Disorders*. 2020;279. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.09.131>
5. Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9). Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. <https://www.sralab.org/rehabilitation-measures/patient-health-questionnaire-phq-9>

## Video explaining more information about the PHQ-9:

[Depression Screening Tool \(PHQ-9\)](#)

## Links to Test

1. [Patient Health Questionnaire-9 \(PHQ-9\) - Mental Health Screening - National HIV Curriculum](#)
2. [Patient Health Questionnaire \(PHQ-9\)](#)