

Scoring the PHQ-9 Modified for Teens

Scoring the PHQ-9 modified for teens is easy but involves thinking about several different aspects of depression.

To use the PHQ-9 as a diagnostic aid for major depressive disorder:

- Questions 1 and/or 2 need to be endorsed as a “2” or “3.”
- Need five or more positive symptoms (positive is defined by a “2” or “3” in questions 1-8 and by a “1”, “2”, or “3” in question 9).
- The functional impairment question (How difficult....) needs to be rated at least as “somewhat difficult.”

To use the PHQ-9 to screen for all types of depression or other mental illness:

- All positive answers (positive is defined by a “2” or “3” in questions 1-8 and by a “1”, “2”, or “3” in question 9) should be followed up by interview.
- A total PHQ-9 score ≥ 10 (see below for instructions on how to obtain a total score) has a good sensitivity and specificity for MDD.

To use the PHQ-9 to aid in the diagnosis of dysthymia:

- The dysthymia question (In the past year...) should be endorsed as “yes.”

To use the PHQ-9 to screen for suicide risk:

- All positive answers to question 9 as well as the two additional suicide items MUST be followed up by a clinical interview.

To use the PHQ-9 to obtain a total score and assess depressive severity:

- Add up the numbers endorsed for questions 1-9 and obtain a total score.
- See table below:

Total Score	Depression Severity
0-4	No or minimal depression
5-9	Mild depression
10-14	Moderate depression
15-19	Moderately severe depression
20-27	Severe depression