

Frequently Asked Questions: Outcome Measures

Outcome measures are a way for your provider to get a sense of how much a particular disorder or problem is affecting you. They are short questionnaires that ask you to make ratings about the symptoms you may be having. Outcome measures can be given either as paper and pencil questionnaires or on a computer/tablet. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions about outcome measures:

Question: What are these scores used for?

Answer: Scores from outcome measures are used to evaluate the best treatment approach and whether treatment is working or not. Your provider will give you feedback on your progress throughout the course of treatment during your sessions.

Question: Who all will be able to see these questionnaires or the scores?

Answer: These questionnaires are considered to be part of your medical record and are protected by the same regulations as your clinical notes. Just like your medical records, your treatment team will not share the questionnaires or the scores with anyone without your consent.

Question: Why did you pick these questionnaires? How do I know they are good questionnaires?

Answer: Our clinic only uses scientifically validated questionnaires, meaning that they have been well researched over many years. The measures can be trusted to provide accurate data.

Question: Do I have to complete the questionnaires?

Answer: We ask that all patients complete these questionnaires regularly since they are a crucial part of care in the clinic. Your provider and the treatment team use the information from these measures on a regular basis when making decisions about your care.

Question: Can you use this to kick me out of the military if I score too high?

Answer: No, not at all. While scores on outcome measures indicate how severe some problems like depression are, they are NEVER used alone to make treatment decisions. Even very high scores on these kinds of measures do not mean that someone needs to be out of the military. This is because even problems like severe depression or anxiety disorders get better with treatment. The outcome measures can actually help your provider show that you are getting better over time.

Question: Why do I need to keep filling out the same questionnaire when you already know my score?

Answer: Outcome measures are not like tests in school. They are more like a thermometer, meaning scores on the questionnaires will go up and down over time. We ask you to take them many times for the same reason nurses check your temperature many times when you are in the hospital, as these numbers also go up and down over time.

Question: Nothing has changed from last week. Do I need to fill this out again?

Answer: Scores are almost never exactly the same, unless someone has no symptoms (e.g., the score might be 0 over and over). Even if the scores are pretty much the same each time, that information is still useful since it tells the treatment team that your symptoms aren't changing, which can inform your treatment plan.