

Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)

About the AUDIT

What does it measure?

The AUDIT is a simple screening measure for identifying excessive alcohol usage. The AUDIT screens for hazardous drinking behaviors or active alcohol use disorders. There are two versions of the AUDIT, one that has ten items and one that has only three items that assess consumption levels.

The ten-item version is referred to as the AUDIT-10, while the three-item version is referred to as the AUDIT-C (“C” for consumption). The AUDIT-10 and the AUDIT-C can both be used as screening measures. If a patient screens positive on the AUDIT-C, they are normally given the full AUDIT-10. Since the AUDIT-C only measures consumption levels, it is often used as an outcome measure to track changes in alcohol use over time.

The AUDIT-10 uses questions 1-3 to assess frequency and quantity, questions 4-6 assess alcohol dependence and drinking behaviors, and questions 7-10 evaluate harmful consequences of drinking.

Availability

The AUDIT-10 and AUDIT-C are publications of the World Health Organization (WHO) and are available for use in the public domain. Both measures are included in the battery of assessments available within the Behavior Health Data Portal (BHDP). The BHDP is a software platform used to measure and examine patient-level clinical outcomes in military behavioral health clinics.

Scoring the AUDIT

What is the scoring range?

Each AUDIT item is measured on a five-point Likert scale from 0 to 4. The scoring range for the AUDIT-10 is 0-40, while the scoring range for the AUDIT-C is 0-12. Higher scores indicate increased likelihood that an individual’s alcohol consumption may be negatively impacting his or her overall health and safety.

What are the clinical cutoffs?

For the AUDIT-C, in men, a score of 4 or more is positive for alcohol misuse; in women, a score of 3 or more is positive for alcohol misuse. Note that a person may receive 4 points from Question #1 alone but score a 0 on Questions #2 and #3. In these cases, the patient may not necessarily be drinking beyond recommended limits. This would be the case if a person has one standard drink a day. Scores above 8 for both men and women on the AUDIT-10 indicate hazardous and harmful levels of drinking and warrant further evaluation and intervention.

AUDIT-C Questionnaire for Detecting Alcoholism
<p>1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Never</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Monthly or less</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. 2-4 times a month</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. 2-3 times a week</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. 4 or more times a week</p>
<p>2. How many standard drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. 1 or 2</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. 3 or 4</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. 5 or 6</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. 7 to 9</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. 10 or more</p>
<p>3. How often do you have six or more drinks on one occasion?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. Never</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. Less than monthly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c. Monthly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d. Weekly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e. Daily or almost daily</p>
<p><small>The AUDIT-C is scored on a scale of 0-12. Each AUDIT-C question has 5 answer choices. Points allotted are: a = 0 points, b = 1 point, c = 2 points, d = 3 points, e = 4 points Men, a score of 4 or more is considered positive, optimal for identifying hazardous drinking or active alcohol use disorders. Women, a score of 3 or more is considered positive, optimal for identifying hazardous drinking or active alcohol use disorders.</small></p>

How should a provider interpret results?

By using both the AUDIT score and the patient's history of alcohol treatment, a provider can ascertain the severity of a patient's alcohol use. A positive score on the AUDIT-C means the patient has a higher probability of risky drinking or an active alcohol-related use disorder. Most patients who screen positive on the AUDIT-C will be at-risk drinkers, defined as drinking that increases an individual's risk of injury and/or medical problems.

The following table gives the WHO's recommended interventions for varying levels of risk based on AUDIT-10 scores.

AUDIT-10 Score	Recommended Intervention
1-7	Alcohol education
8-15	Simple advice
16-19	Simple advice plus brief counseling and continued monitoring
>20	Referral to Specialist for diagnostic evaluation and treatment

Using the AUDIT in Practice

How should providers use the results in treatment planning?

Since the scores on the AUDIT-C reflect severity, they can be used to assess the probability that a patient meets the full criteria for an alcohol-related use disorder. The AUDIT-C also can be used to establish a baseline at the start of treatment. Like other outcome measures, it can be utilized as a guide to facilitate appropriate therapeutic interventions and can be administered throughout the course of treatment to assess change and progress over time.

References

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