

# Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ)

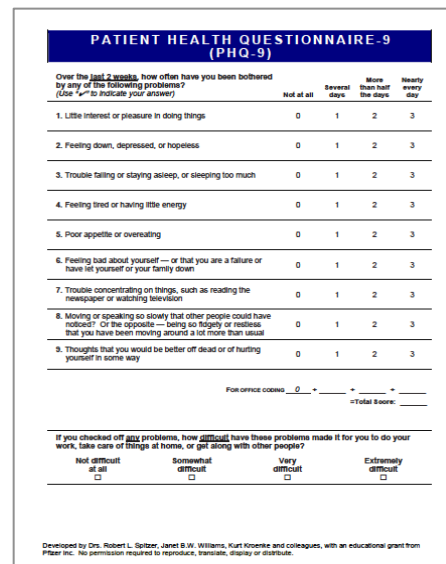
## About the PHQ

### What does it measure?

The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) is a self-report instrument that measures depression severity. The PHQ-9 is a nine-item measure that incorporates characteristic symptoms of Major Depressive Disorder and the presence and duration of suicidal ideation. Alternative forms of the PHQ depression measure include the PHQ-2. The PHQ-2 is a brief measure of depression that comprises the first two questions of the PHQ-9. Primary care settings typically use the PHQ-2 to briefly screen patients for depression. It is recommended to administer the full PHQ-9 after a patient endorses the first two items on the PHQ-2.

### Availability

All PHQ measures are available in the public domain. No permission is required to reproduce, translate, display or distribute them. The PHQ measures were developed by Drs. Robert L. Spitzer, Janet B.W. Williams, Kurt Kroenke and colleagues with the support of an educational grant from Pfizer Inc. The PHQ-2 and PHQ-9 are also included in the battery of measures 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.



**PATIENT HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE-9 (PHQ-9)**

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems? (Use "0" to indicate your answer)

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	0	1	2	3
4. Feeling tired or having little energy	0	1	2	3
5. Poor appetite or overeating	0	1	2	3
6. Feeling bad about yourself — or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down	0	1	2	3
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	0	1	2	3
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Or the opposite — being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	0	1	2	3
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way	0	1	2	3

For correct scoring: 0 = 0, 1 = 1, 2 = 2, 3 = 3  
Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

If you checked off any problems, how difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

Not difficult at all	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## Scoring the PHQ

### What is the scoring range?

Each item is rated on a four-point scale from 0, indicating the least severity, to 3, indicating the greatest severity. The overall range for the PHQ-9 is 0-27 for the total score. The PHQ-2 is used as a brief screener with an overall range of 0-6.

### What are the clinical cutoffs, if any?

Scores of 5, 10, 15, and 20 represent cut points for mild, moderate, moderately severe, and severe depression, respectively on the PHQ-9. The PHQ-8 is scored like the PHQ-9, with identical cut points. For the PHQ-2, a score of 3 is used as a clinical cutoff score, indicating the need for additional assessment.

## How should a provider interpret results for the PHQ-9?

Score	Depression Severity	Proposed Treatment Actions
0 – 4	None-Minimal	None
5 – 9	Mild	Watchful waiting; repeat PHQ-9 at follow-up
10 – 14	Moderate	Treatment plan, considering counseling, follow-up and/or pharmacotherapy
15 – 19	Moderately Severe	Active treatment with pharmacotherapy and/or psychotherapy
20 – 27	Severe	Immediate initiation of pharmacotherapy and, if severe impairment or poor response to therapy, expedited referral to a behavioral health specialist for psychotherapy and/or collaborative management

### Using the PHQ in Practice

#### How should providers use the results in treatment planning?

Although the PHQ-2 is an excellent screening measure, it is not intended to be used as an outcome measure. Providers should use the PHQ-9 as an objective measure of depression severity. The PHQ-9 can be used to establish a baseline of depression severity and to guide the provider in the type and intensity of therapeutic intervention. The PHQ-9 may be utilized to assess changes over time in depressive symptomology and responses to treatment. As a tool for measurement-based care, the PHQ-9 can assist with validating the patient's experience, empowering decision-making, and positively impacting the clinical relationship.

Note: Copies of the PHQ family of measures, including the GAD-7, are available at [www.phqscreeners.com](http://www.phqscreeners.com). The website requests acknowledgement of use agreement and that, "Content found at the PHQ Screeners site is expressly exempted from Pfizer's general copyright restrictions; content found on the PHQ Screeners site is free for download and use as stated within the PHQ Screeners site." (phqscreeners.com)

#### References

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