

Alcohol Symptom Checklist

This checklist will help you and your provider understand how alcohol and other drugs might be affecting your health.

Please think about your life in the last 12 months. Then go through the questions below and answer “yes” or “no” for each one.

In the last 12 months . . .

	YES	NO
1. Did drinking the same amount have less effect that it used to? Or did you have to drink more to feel the effect you wanted? <i>Please answer “yes” if either question is true for you.</i>		
2. Did you have an upset stomach or get sweaty, shaky, or nervous when you weren’t drinking or when you tried to cut down? Did you drink alcohol or take something to help you feel better? <i>Please answer “yes” if either question is true for you.</i>		
3. Did you have times when you drank more or for longer than you wanted to?		
4. Did you want to cut back or stop drinking, but couldn’t?		
5. Did you spend a lot of time getting alcohol, drinking, or feeling hungover?		
6. Did you continue to drink even though you thought it might be causing physical or mental problems — or making them worse?		
7. Did drinking make it harder for you to keep up with your responsibilities at work, school, or home?		
8. Did you do dangerous things more than once after drinking — like drive a car or operate machinery?		
9. Did you drink alcohol even though you thought it might be causing problems with your family or other people?		
10. Did you have strong desires or cravings for alcohol?		
11. Did you spend less time working, enjoying hobbies, or being with others because of your drinking?		
Number of “Yes” responses		

(For the health professional)

Scoring the checklist*

Each “Yes” answer receives a point. Points are added for a total score that reflects the severity of a possible alcohol use disorder. The health professional should assess whether symptoms reoccur. If symptoms reoccur, refer to table below:

Score	Category	Indicated action
0 - 1	Symptoms are not consistent with an alcohol use disorder	Brief education
2 - 3	Symptoms are consistent with mild alcohol use disorder	Brief intervention using motivational interviewing and harm reduction.
4 - 5	Symptoms are consistent with moderate alcohol use disorder	
6+	Symptoms are consistent with severe alcohol use disorder	

Surveys report that most people living with a substance use disorder do not believe they need treatment. The path to accepting treatment for an alcohol use disorder is usually forged over time and begins with the patient reducing harm from their use and improving their quality of life.

The patient may be willing to brainstorm ways to reduce their harm from drinking, which can include stopping drinking; accepting counseling, medications, or participation in a support group; reducing drinking; counting drinks; not using other substances when drinking; substituting less intoxicating beverages; drinking on a full stomach; drinking in safer environments; getting regular health care. The patient may choose not to change their drinking.

Below is a four-step model of performing a brief intervention. More info at www.sbirthoregon.org

Raise the subject

- “Thanks for filling out this form – is it okay if we briefly talk about your alcohol use?”
- “Just so you know, my role is to help you assess the risks so you can make your own decisions. I want to help you improve your quality of life on your own timeline.”
- “What can you tell me about your alcohol use?”

Share information

- Explain any association between the patient’s use and their health complaint, then ask, “Do you think your use has anything to do with your [anxiety, insomnia, STD, etc.]?”
- Share information about alcohol use disorder.
- Ask the patient: “What do you think of this information?”

Enhance motivation

- Ask patient about perceived pros and cons of their use, then summarize what you hear.
- Elicit a goal: “Where do you want to go from here? What’s your goal, or vision?”
- Gauge patient’s readiness/confidence to reach their goal. If using Readiness Ruler: “Why do did you pick that number on a scale of 0-10 instead of ____ [lower number]?”

Identify plan

- If patient is ready, ask: “What steps do you think you can take to reach your goal?”
- Affirm the patient’s readiness/confidence to meet their goal and affirm their plan.
- “Can we schedule an appointment to check in and see how your plan is going? You may want to change your goal or make a new plan.”

* Hallgren KA, Matson TE, Oliver M, Witkiewitz K, Bobb JF, Lee AK, Caldeiro RM, Kivlahan D, Bradley KA. Practical Assessment of Alcohol Use Disorder in Routine Primary Care: Performance of an Alcohol Symptom Checklist. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2022 Jun;37(8):1885-1893. doi: 10.1007/s11606-021-07038-3. Epub 2021 Aug 16. PMID: 34398395; PMCID: PMC9198160.