SCREENING FOR DRUG USE IN GENERAL MEDICAL SETTINGS

Quick Reference Guide

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Why Screen for Drug Use in General Medical Settings?

» Identify drug users early and briefly educate them about the adverse consequences of continued drug use and available resources for quitting

» Enhance medical care by increasing awareness of the potential impact of substance use on physical health—more specifically, the interaction of substance use with a patient’s medical care, including potentially fatal drug interactions

» Improve linkages between primary and secondary health care services and specialty drug and alcohol treatment services

How do you screen and provide feedback? The Five As:

» Ask

» Advise

» Assist

» Arrange

» Assess
## STEP 1

**Using the NIDA Quick Screen, ask the patient about past-year drug use.**

*In the past year, how many times have you used the following?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug Type</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once or Twice</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Daily or Almost Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (For men, 5 or more drinks in a day; for women, 4 or more drinks in a day)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco Products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescription Drugs for Nonmedical Reasons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal Drugs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Patient reports no past-year drug use:**
Reinforce abstinence. Screening is complete.

**For more information on use of tobacco and/or alcohol:** Go to page 3.

**Patient reports past-year use of illegal drugs or prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons:** Go to page 4.

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### Tobacco and Alcohol

#### TOBACCO USE

Any current tobacco use places a patient at risk. **Advise** all tobacco users to quit.

*For more information on smoking cessation, please see “Helping Smokers Quit: A Guide for Clinicians” at [http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/tobacco/clinhlpsmksqt.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/tobacco/clinhlpsmksqt.htm).*

#### ALCOHOL USE

**If the answer is:**

- **Never**—**Advise** patient to stay within these limits:
  - ✓ For healthy **men** under the age of 65: No more than 4 drinks per day AND no more than 14 drinks per week.
  - ✓ For healthy **women** under the age of 65: No more than 3 drinks per day AND no more than 7 drinks per week.
  - ✓ Encourage talking openly about alcohol and any concerns it may raise, and rescreen annually.

- **One or more days of heavy drinking**
  - Patient is an at-risk drinker.

STEP 2

Ask the patient about lifetime drug use.

Q1. Which one of the following substances have you ever used in your lifetime?

a. **Cannabis** (marijuana, pot, grass, hash, etc.)

b. **Cocaine** (coke, crack, etc.)

c. **Prescription stimulants* (Ritalin, Concerta, Dexedrine, Adderall, diet pills, etc.)

d. **Methamphetamine** (speed, ice, etc.)

e. **Inhalants** (nitrous, glue, gas, paint thinner, etc.)

f. **Sedatives or sleeping pills* (Valium, Serepax, Xanax, etc.)

g. **Hallucinogens** (LSD, acid, mushrooms, PCP, Special K, ecstasy, etc.)

h. **Street opioids** (heroin, opium, etc.)

i. **Prescription opioids* (fentanyl, oxycodone, hydrocodone, methadone, buprenorphine, etc.)

j. **Other—Specify**

* Please report nonmedical use only: Do not record medications that are used as prescribed by a doctor.

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**Patient reports no lifetime drug use:**

Given the patient’s response to the NIDA Quick Screen, the patient should not indicate “NONE” for all drugs in Question 1. If they do, remind them that their answers to the NIDA Quick Screen indicated they used an illegal or prescription drug for nonmedical reasons within the past year and then repeat Question 1.

If the patient indicates that the drug used is not listed, please note name of drug next to ‘Other.’

If the patient says “Yes” to any of the drugs, proceed to next page.
**Patient reports lifetime use of one or more substances:**

Ask the following questions for each drug mentioned (scores will be tallied at the end)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2. In the past 3 months, how often have you used each of the substances you mentioned [first drug, second drug, etc.]?</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If the answer to Question 2 is “never,” skip to Question 6. Otherwise, continue: *In the past three months...*

| Q3. How often have you had a strong desire or urge to use? | 0 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Q4. How often has your use of [first drug, second drug, etc.] led to health, social, legal, or financial problems? | 0 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Q5. How often have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of your use of [first drug, second drug, etc.]? | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

For each substance *ever used* (i.e., those mentioned in the “lifetime” question):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For each substance ever used (i.e., those mentioned in the “lifetime” question):</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES, but not in the past three months</th>
<th>YES, in the past three months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q6. Has a friend or relative or anyone else ever expressed concern about your use of [first drug, second drug, etc.]?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7. Have you ever tried and failed to control, cut down, or stop using [first drug, second drug, etc.]?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8. Have you ever used any drug by injection? <em>(nonmedical use only)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recommend HIV/hepatitis B &amp; C testing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEP 3

Determine risk level

For each substance (except tobacco and alcohol), add up the scores for Questions 2 through 7. To determine patient’s risk level and the respective recommendations, see below:

- **High Risk**
  - Score $\geq 27$
  - ✓ Provide feedback on the screening results
  - ✓ Advise, Assess, and Assist
  - ✓ Arrange referral
  - ✓ Offer continuing support

- **Moderate Risk**
  - Score 4–26
  - ✓ Provide feedback
  - ✓ Advise, Assess, and Assist
  - ✓ Consider referral based on clinical judgment
  - ✓ Offer continuing support

- **Lower Risk**
  - Score 0–3
  - ✓ Provide feedback
  - ✓ Reinforce abstinence
  - ✓ Offer continuing support

STEP 4

Depending on risk level:

- **Advise**—Provide medical advice related to patient’s drug use.
- **Assess**—Determine patient’s readiness to change.
- **Assist**—Offer help based on patient’s readiness level.
- **Arrange**—Refer patient for specialty assessment and/or drug treatment, if necessary.
RESOURCES

1. World Health Organization—The ASSIST Project: Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test
   http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/activities/assist_v3_english.pdf

2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SBIRT Web site: http://www.samhsa.gov/prevention/sbirt

3. NIAAA's Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much: A Clinician's Guide:

4. SAMHSA's Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator: http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov

5. NIDA’s National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network Community Treatment Programs:
   http://www.drugabuse.gov/CTN/ctps.php

6. For Certification in Office-Based Buprenorphine:
   http://buprenorphine.samhsa.gov/waiver_qualifications.html

7. AHRQ’s Helping Smokers Quit: A Guide for Clinicians:
   http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/tobacco/clinhlpsmksqt.htm

   http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/170/13/1155

9. Coding for SBI Reimbursement:
Please visit [www.drugabuse.gov/NIDAMED](http://www.drugabuse.gov/NIDAMED) for an interactive screening tool, screening resources guide, and additional resources.