

A Guide to the K10 Symptom Scale

The K10 is widely recommended as a simple measure of psychological distress and as a measure of outcomes following treatment for common mental health disorders. The K10 is in the public domain and is promoted on the Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression website (www.crufad.org) as a self report measure to identify need for treatment. It is reproduced below.

The 10 item scale has five response categories and the score is the sum of those responses:

<i>None of the time</i>	scores 1
<i>A little of the time</i>	scores 2
<i>Some of the time</i>	scores 3
<i>Most of the time</i>	scores 4
<i>All of the time</i>	scores 5

Questions 3 and 6 are not asked if the preceding question was 'none of the time' in which case questions 3 and 6 would automatically receive a score of one.

Total scores range from 10 (no distress) to 50 (severe distress).

People who score **0-15** have one quarter the population risk of meeting criteria for an anxiety or depressive disorder as identified by the CIDI, and a remote chance of reporting a suicidal attempt in their lifetime.

People who score **16-30** have a one in four chance (three times the population risk) of having a current anxiety or depressive disorder and 1% chance (three times the population risk) of ever having made a suicide attempt.

People who score **30-50** have a three out of four chance (ten times the population risk) of meeting criteria for an anxiety or depressive disorder and 6% chance (20 times the population risk) of ever having made a suicide attempt.

- The first group comprise 78% of the population and are told their score is low and that they probably do not need the self help information.
- The second group, 20% of the population, are encouraged to use the information and self help techniques.
- The third group, 2% of the population, are strongly encouraged to seek medical help.

For further information on the K10 please refer to www.crufad.org or Andrews, G Slade, T. Interpreting scores on the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*: 2001; 25:6: 494-497.

From CRUFAD (Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression) website.
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