

Kessler psychological distress scale (K10)

Name: _____

Date: _____

For all questions, please circle the answer most commonly related to you. Questions 3 and 6 automatically receive a score of one if the previous question was 'none of the time'.

| In the past four weeks: | None of the time | A little of the time | Some of the time | Most of the time | All of the time |
|--|------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. About how often did you feel tired out for no good reason? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. About how often did you feel nervous? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. About how often did you feel so nervous that nothing could calm you down? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. About how often did you feel hopeless? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. About how often did you feel restless or fidgety? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. About how often did you feel so restless you could not sit still? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. About how often did you feel depressed? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. About how often did you feel that everything is an effort? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. About how often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. About how often did you feel worthless? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Total: | | | | | |

Test: Kessler (1996)

Normative data: Australian Bureau of Statistics. (1997)

K10 scoring and interpretation

The Kessler psychological distress scale (K10) (Kessler 1996) is a widely used, simple self-report measure of psychological distress which can be used to identify those in need of further assessment for anxiety and depression. This measure was designed for use in the general population; however, it may also serve as a useful clinical tool. The K10 comprises 10 questions that are answered using a five-point scale (where 5 = all of the time, and 1 = none of the time). For all questions, the client circles the answer truest for them in the past four weeks. Scores are then summed with the maximum score of 50 indicating severe distress, and the minimum score of 10 indicating no distress. A guide to interpreting K10 scores is provided in Table 1.

A number of studies have been conducted to test the reliability and validity of the K10, and its brief version, the K6. Good reliability and validity have been found when these measures have been used with individuals with AOD use disorders (Arnaud, et al., 2010; Hides, et al., 2007; Rush, et al., 2013).

Table 1: Severity of psychological distress according to K10 score

| K10 score | Level of psychological distress |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 10-15 | Low |
| 16-21 | Moderate |
| 22-29 | High |
| 30-50 | Very high |

Source: Andrews & Slade (2001).

Extract from Marel C, Siedlecka E, Fisher A, Gournay K, Deady M, Baker A, Kay-Lambkin F, Teesson M, Baillie A, Mills KL (2022). *Guidelines on the management of co-occurring alcohol and other drug and mental health conditions in alcohol and other drug treatment settings (3rd edition)*. Sydney, Australia: Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, The University of Sydney.

For more information, visit www.comorbidityguidelines.org.au

References

Andrews & Slade T. (2001). Interpreting scores on the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 25, 494-497.

Arnaud, B., Malet, L., Teissedre, F., Izaute, M., Moustafa, F., Geneste, J., Brousse, G. (2010). Validity study of Kessler's psychological distress scales conducted among patients admitted to French emergency department for alcohol consumption-related disorders. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 34(7), 1235-1245.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (1997). *National Survey of Mental Health and Well-being*. Canberra, Australia.

Hides, L., Lubman, D. I., Devlin, H., Cotton, S., Aitken, C., Gibbie, T., & Hellard, M. (2007). Reliability and validity of the Kessler 10 and Patient Health Questionnaire among injecting drug users. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 41(2), 166-168

Kessler, R. C. (1996). *Kessler's 10 Psychological Distress Scale*. Boston, MA, US: Harvard Medical School.

Rush, B., Castel, S., Brands, B., Toneatto, T., & Veldhuizen, S. (2013). Validation and comparison of diagnostic accuracy of four screening tools for mental disorders in people seeking treatment for substance use disorders. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 44(4), 375-383.

Extract from Marel C, Siedlecka E, Fisher A, Gournay K, Deady M, Baker A, Kay-Lambkin F, Teesson M, Baillie A, Mills KL (2022). *Guidelines on the management of co-occurring alcohol and other drug and mental health conditions in alcohol and other drug treatment settings (3rd edition)*. Sydney, Australia: Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, The University of Sydney.

For more information, visit www.comorbidityguidelines.org.au