

How to add up your PHQ score

The PHQ is used to give 2 different scores:

1. A “diagnosis” score. This only counts scores of 2 or 3 to give a total. The “diagnosis” score gives you an idea of how severe your depression is and what kinds of help are likely to be best for you (see below)
2. A “follow-up” score. This counts all scores – 1, 2 and 3 – to give a more sensitive idea of how your depression is changing over time. If you find that your scores are not falling over the next month or two or are actually getting worse then we’d recommend that you speak to your GP.

What do PHQ scores mean?

PHQ less than 15 This usually means you have “mild” depression: taking antidepressants is not usually helpful	
If you scored between 0 and 9: While your mood may be having a real effect on your everyday life, you probably don’t have problems severe enough to count as “clinical depression”. Almost everyone with this kind of low mood will find that they are better within 6-8 weeks without any treatment at all.	If you scored between 10 and 14: Scores at this level don’t technically count as “clinical” depression but you will be feeling very low at times. Most people recover without any difficulty or further help but we’d recommend that you keep a check on your mood over the next few weeks – why not repeat this PHQ in about a week’s time? If your mood is not getting better within a month we would recommend that you speak to your GP.
Antidepressant medicines aren’t usually helpful for people with mild depression. Instead of taking medicine we would recommend that you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check out some of the options on: www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk or www.doingwell.org.uk - Read the information about depression at: www.rcpsych.ac.uk - Take gentle exercise for at least 20 minutes, at least 5 days a week - You might like to read one of these books: “Overcoming Depression” by Chris Williams (The self-help book used in “doing well”) “Mind Over Mood” by Greenberger and Padesky (An alternative to Chris Williams’ book “Sunbathing in the Rain” by Gwyneth Lewis (A wise and sometimes amusing book about depression, written from personal experience) “Life and How to Survive It” by Robin Skynner and John Cleese (John Cleese was so impressed by his own experience of therapy that he wrote a book about it. Easy to read, jargon-free and well-informed) 	
PHQ 15 or more This probably means you have a “clinical” depression: taking an antidepressant medicine usually helps people to recover	
If you scored 15 to 19: Scores above 15 would be the equivalent of a diagnosis of “clinical” depression. Most people with this level of depression don’t recover without professional help. This is likely to be either an antidepressant, “talking therapy” of some kind, or both. We would strongly recommend that you contact your GP to discuss your mood. Take a copy of the PHQ with you.	If you scored 20 or more: People with depression of this severity are really quite ill: we would recommend that you consult your GP promptly. We would also recommend that you take an antidepressant. Your GP may suggest that you see a Mental Health Specialist.