

Use of the PHQ-9 for Treatment Selection and Monitoring

Step 1

A depression diagnosis that warrants treatment or a treatment change, needs at least one of the first two questions endorsed as positive (“more than half the days” or “nearly every day”) in the past two weeks. In addition, the tenth question, about difficulty at work or home or getting along with others should be answered at least “somewhat difficult”

Step 2

Add the total points for each of the columns 2-4 separately

(Column 1 = Several days; Column 2 = More than half the days; Column 3 = Nearly every day. Add the totals for each of the three columns together. This is the Total Score

The Total Score = the Severity Score

Step 3

Review the Severity Score using the following TABLE.

PHQ-9 Score	Provisional Diagnosis	Treatment Recommendation <i>Patient Preferences should be considered</i>
5-9	Minimal Symptoms*	Support, educate to call if worse, return in one month
10-14	Minor depression ++ Dysthymia* Major Depression, mild	Support, watchful waiting Antidepressant or psychotherapy Antidepressant or psychotherapy
15-19	Major depression, moderately severe	Antidepressant or psychotherapy
>20	Major Depression, severe	Antidepressant and psychotherapy (especially if not improved on monotherapy)

* If symptoms present \geq two years, then probable chronic depression which warrants antidepressants or psychotherapy (ask “In the past 2 years have you felt depressed or sad most days, even if you felt okay sometimes?”)

++ If symptoms present \geq one month or severe functional impairment, consider active treatment