

Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (PHQ-2) to Use to Preliminarily Screen Dental Patients for Depression

Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?	Not at All	Several Days	More than Half the Days	Nearly Every Day
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3

- These are the first 2 questions from the PHQ-9; they target mood and lack of pleasure (anhedonia).
- These 2 questions are 97% sensitive; 67% specific in adults, 38% positive predictive value, and 93% negative predictive value for identification of depression.
- The total score ranges from 0-6; **≥ 3 is positive.**
- Patients who screen positive, ≥ 3 , should be further evaluated by a medical provider and/or behavioral health provider (BHCP) using the PHQ-9 (or another validated instrument) to determine whether they meet the criteria for a major depressive disorder.
- Screen patients at least annually; however, these two questions are easy to ask at each dental visit.
- Start screening at age 12.
- Add screening questions to the medical history and new patient questionnaires, or routinely ask at the beginning of the appointment.
- Explain to patients that since depression increases the risk for oral diseases and conditions, and it reduces immunity to infection (which is especially important during a pandemic), your team is dedicated to screen all patients for depression.
- Record the type of screening instrument used and document results, the patient's response and discussion, next steps, etc., in progress notes, and initial.

Dentists and dental hygienists should evaluate patients' responses.

- Ask follow-up questions as appropriate. Example: "Have you ever been under the care of a counselor or other provider," and "have the medications helped?"
- Determine whether patient should go to his/her physician or go directly to a BHCP.

Build a referral network of BHCPs

- Include BHCPs (i.e., psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical social workers, pastors) who will see low-income patients, or those without mental health benefits.
- Make sure to get a release from the patient before contacting other HCPs or family members.
- Consider asking a BHCP to help you set up the screening protocol and ask about how to respond to patients' questions about depression and screening.
- Ask BHCPs about what kind of documentation they need, and discuss the referral, tracking and follow-up process. Discuss how to make a 'warm handoff'.
- Train BHCPs in your referral base how to screen (non-invasively) patients for periodontal disease (BUG questions), poor oral hygiene, and dry mouth and refer to you.

Medical Screening for Periodontal Disease: The BUG Questions

- Do you have **b**leeding gums?
- Do you have **u**nsteady teeth?
- Do you have receding **g**ums, or do your teeth look longer?



- Ask BHCPs to visit your office to do a lunch and learn that will help the team better understand depression; offer to reciprocate about oral health.

Consider providing a dedicated space/private area in your office for a BHCP to follow-up with patients who preliminarily screen positive for depression and/or counselling sessions. Patients are already there, and often, patients would prefer to say they are going to the dentist's office instead of the therapist's office

Oral HCPs & Behavioral HCPs' Bi-Lateral Point-of-Care Screening & Referral



OHCP screens patient for depression and refers to a BHCP



BHCP screens patient for periodontal disease and refers to an OHCP



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