

# Readiness to Change Ruler

The readiness to change ruler is used to assess your patient's willingness to change. This can be especially important when attempting to assist your patient with behavioral change for disease prevention, such as obesity. The ruler ranges from “not prepared to change” to “already changing.” Providers can use this as a tool to open discussion or identification of perceived barriers and help patients overcome them.

This short questionnaire can be used to quickly identify how motivated your patient is and thus inform what your interventions you will employ. The patients readiness to change needs to be based on a specific behavior such as dieting or exercising. An individual can vary across in stages across different behaviors.

## How to Use the Ruler

1. Ask your patient to mark on the change continuum line from 0 to 10 their current state in the change process. The 0 on the left side of the scale means “not prepared for change” and a 10 on the right side means “already changing”
2. Then question your patient about why they did not mark further to the left (closer to “not prepared to change”) to gather feedback on their motivation
3. Ask your patient what it would take to get them to move to the right (toward “already changing”) to elicit discussion of barriers
4. Once you identify barriers, ask the patient for suggestions of how they can overcome their barriers

## Scoring

If a patient chooses a score above 5 they are considered willing to consider change and need to be supported and encouraged

## Follow-Up Questions

1. If the patient's mark is on the left side of the line:
  - How will you know when it is time to think about changing?
  - What signals will tell you to start thinking about changing?
  - What qualities in yourself are important to you?
  - What connection is there between those qualities and “not considering a change?”
2. If the patient's mark is somewhere in the middle:
  - Why did you put your mark there and not further to the left?
  - What might make you put your mark a little further to the right?
  - What are the good things about the way you are currently trying to change?
  - What are the not-so-good things?
  - What would be the good result of changing?
  - What are the barriers to changing?
3. If the patient's mark is on the right side of the line:
  - Pick one of the barriers to change and list some things that could help you overcome this barrier
  - Pick one of those things that could help and decide to do it by (pick a date)
4. If the patient has taken a serious step in making a change:
  - What made you decide on that particular step?
  - What has worked in taking this step?
  - What helped it work?
  - What could help it work even better?
  - What else would help?
  - Can you break that helpful step into smaller pieces?
  - Pick one of those pieces and try to do it by (pick a specific date)
5. If the patient is changing and trying to maintain that change:
  - Congratulations! What's helping you?
  - What else would help?
  - What are your high-risk situations?
6. If the patient has “fallen off the wagon”:
  - What worked for a while?
  - Don't kick yourself – long-term change almost always takes a few cycles
  - What did you learn from the experience that will help you when you give it another try?