

ASSIST [1]

Description: ASSIST Questionnaire

The ASSIST, Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test, can be administered in a primary care setting. This test has 8 questions that cover the use of 10 substances (tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, amphetamine-type stimulants, inhalants, sedatives, hallucinogens, opioids, and “other drugs.” This test takes approximately 15 minutes to administer and score in a primary care setting to both adults and adolescents through a patient interview.

Evidence

- The ASSIST has been shown to discriminate between substance use, abuse and dependence (Humenuik et al. 2008)
- Found as a valid screening test for identifying individuals who use several substances with varying degrees of severity

Indications

- The ASSIST can be administered by the provider in order to provide a brief screening for drug and alcohol use.

Advantages

- An international test-retest study showed that the ASSIST items are reliable despite differences in culture
- Includes a measure of psychological dependence and harmful use
- Measures drug and alcohol use in the past three months

Limitations

- Each question has several sub-statements, and therefore the test can become long

ASSIST

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- Should be administered by a provider or healthcare worker, not by a self-report
- Calculating the Specific Substance Involvement Score can be time consuming

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Scoring

For each substance (labelled a. to j.) add up the scores received for questions 2 through 7 inclusive.

Do not include the results from either Q1 or Q8 in this score.

For example, a score for cannabis would be calculated as: Q2c + Q3c + Q4c + Q5c + Q6c + Q7c

Note that Q5 for tobacco is not coded, and is calculated as: Q2a + Q3a + Q4a + Q6a + Q7a

See ASSIST document to match the Specific Substance Involvement Score to an appropriate level of intervention.

References

Humeniuk R, Ali R, Babor T, et al. Validation of the alcohol, smoking and substance involvement screening test (ASSIST). *Addiction* [serial online]. June 2008;103(6):1039-1047. Available from: Academic Search Premier, Ipswich, MA. Accessed February 10, 2010.

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