

## A Guide to the K10 Symptom Scale

The K10 is widely recommended as a simple measure of psychological distress and as a measure of outcomes following treatment for common mental health disorders. The K10 is in the public domain and is promoted on the Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression website ([www.crufad.org](http://www.crufad.org)) as a self report measure to identify need for treatment. It is reproduced below.

The 10 item scale has five response categories and the score is the sum of those responses:

<i>None of the time</i>	scores 1
<i>A little of the time</i>	scores 2
<i>Some of the time</i>	scores 3
<i>Most of the time</i>	scores 4
<i>All of the time</i>	scores 5

Questions 3 and 6 are not asked if the preceding question was 'none of the time' in which case questions 3 and 6 would automatically receive a score of one.

Total scores range from 10 (no distress) to 50 (severe distress).

People who score **0-15** have one quarter the population risk of meeting criteria for an anxiety or depressive disorder as identified by the CIDI, and a remote chance of reporting a suicidal attempt in their lifetime.

People who score **16-30** have a one in four chance (three times the population risk) of having a current anxiety or depressive disorder and 1% chance (three times the population risk) of ever having made a suicide attempt.

People who score **30-50** have a three out of four chance (ten times the population risk) of meeting criteria for an anxiety or depressive disorder and 6% chance (20 times the population risk) of ever having made a suicide attempt.

- The first group comprise 78% of the population and are told their score is low and that they probably do not need the self help information.
- The second group, 20% of the population, are encouraged to use the information and self help techniques.
- The third group, 2% of the population, are strongly encouraged to seek medical help.

For further information on the K10 please refer to [www.crufad.org](http://www.crufad.org) or Andrews, G Slade, T. Interpreting scores on the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*: 2001; 25:6: 494-497.

From CRUFAD (Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression) website.  
[www.gpcare.org](http://www.gpcare.org) Clinician Support / K10