

Pain Assessment Tool Guidelines for use: Verbal Descriptor Scale

(0)	(2)	(4)	(6)	(8)	(10)
No Pain	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Extreme	Worst Pain

Instructions for use:

Ask the patient: “are you having any pain (discomfort) right now?”

- If no, then indicate ‘0’.

If the patient indicates they have pain, ask:

- “Would you say that your pain is the worst imaginable pain, the worst that you (or anybody else) have ever experienced?” If so, the score of “10” is recorded.
- If not then ask: Would you say that your discomfort is mild, moderate, severe or extreme in nature right now?

Scoring instructions: (see above)

0=no pain 2 = mild pain 4=moderate pain 6=severe pain 8=extreme pain 10=worst pain

If the patient indicates that their discomfort is between two of the descriptors, (e.g. between moderate and severe), then the odd number between these values (e.g. “5”) is recorded.

Populations for use:

VDS can be used for patients over age 7, who are able to understand and use the scale. It can be used for both chronic and acute pain. It is used for patients that have a hard time quantifying pain using the Numeric Pain Scale.

Validity and reliability:

VDS is valid and reliable for younger and older age groups, and has been shown to be reliable in different ethnic and cultural groups as well as adults with mildly cognitive impairments.

References:

- Gagliese L, Weizblit N, Ellis W, et al. (2005). The measurement of postoperative pain: A comparison of intensity scales in younger and older surgical patients. *Pain*, 117, 412-420.
- Gaston-Johansson F, Albert M, Fagan E et al. (1990) Similarities in pain descriptors of four different ethnic-cultural groups. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 5: 94-100.
- Ware LJ, Epps C, Herr K, et al. (2006) Evaluation of the revised faces pain scale, verbal descriptor scale, numeric rating scale, and Iowa pain thermometer in older minority adults. *Pain Management Nursing*, 7, 117-125.