



Screening for Depression in Adults: Clinical Summary

Population	Adults aged ≥18 y
Recommendation	Screen for depression, with adequate systems in place to ensure accurate diagnosis, effective treatment, and appropriate follow-up. Grade: B

Risk Assessment	<p>Women, young and middle-aged adults, and nonwhite persons have higher rates of depression, as do persons who are undereducated, previously married, or unemployed. Persons with chronic illnesses, other mental health disorders, or a family history of psychiatric disorders are also at increased risk.</p> <p>Risk factors in older adults include disability and poor health status related to medical illness, complicated grief, chronic sleep disturbance, loneliness, and history of depression. Risk factors during pregnancy and postpartum include poor self-esteem, childcare stress, prenatal anxiety, life stress, decreased social support, single/unpartnered relationship status, history of depression, difficult infant temperament, previous postpartum depression, lower socioeconomic status, and unintended pregnancy.</p>
Screening Tests	Commonly used depression screening instruments include the Patient Health Questionnaire in various forms and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scales in adults, the Geriatric Depression Scale in older adults, and the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale in postpartum and pregnant women. Positive screening results should lead to additional assessment that considers severity of depression and comorbid psychological problems, alternate diagnoses, and medical conditions.
Screening Interval	The optimal timing and interval for screening for depression is not known. A pragmatic approach might include screening all adults who have not been screened previously and using clinical judgment in consideration of risk factors, comorbid conditions, and life events to determine if additional screening of high-risk patients is warranted.
Treatment and Interventions	Effective treatment of depression in adults generally includes antidepressants or specific psychotherapy approaches, alone or in combination. Given the potential harms to the fetus and newborn child from certain pharmacologic agents, clinicians are encouraged to consider evidence-based counseling interventions when managing depression in pregnant or breastfeeding women.
Balance of Benefits and Harms	The net benefit of screening for depression in the general adult population is moderate.
Other Relevant USPSTF Recommendations	The USPSTF has made recommendations on screening for depression in children and adolescents and screening for suicide risk in adolescents, adults, and older adults. These recommendations are available on the USPSTF Web site (www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org).

For a summary of the evidence systematically reviewed in making this recommendation, the full recommendation statement, and supporting documents, please go to www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org.