

Alcohol and Drug Cognitive Enhancement (ACE) Program

ACE screening tool and user guide



Drug and Alcohol Network

Agency for Clinical Innovation

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Administration

The ACE screening tool is a brief set of questions that was developed to be administered by frontline alcohol and other drug clinicians to clients. It is recommended that an examiner ask the questions exactly as they are written and record responses on the record form. This allows the examiner to clarify questions if required.

Information in this document expands on and clarifies each of the questions. The screening tool itself is on page three.

This screening tool also includes optional questions that may be asked by the examiner in order to inform the clinical assessment. These questions are not scored as part of the screening.

Clinicians in NSW Health facilities should use the patient record version of this tool NH700804 (see Appendix 1).

Please note

The authors are aware that some services may wish to hand the set of questions to clients to complete independently without the involvement of a staff member. We strongly advise against doing that, because the fidelity of the data may be compromised if the client cannot ask clarifying questions if required. Please note, as the normative and validation data were collected via face-to-face administration, the applicability of the screening tool if handed to a client has not been validated.

Clarification of questions

1. Have you ever lost consciousness following a blow to the head?

Loss of consciousness includes:

- blacking out (note, this refers only to blacking out following a blow to the head, as distinct from blacking out due to severe intoxication)
- being unresponsive.

A blow to the head may include any of the following:

- hitting your head against a steering wheel in a motor vehicle accident
- falling over and hitting your head on the ground
- being hit in the head by a projectile, such as a cricket ball
- being struck in the head by another person in an assault
- being struck in the head during a contact sport, such as football.

2. Did you ever have to go to hospital following a head injury?

This includes going to the emergency department or being admitted to hospital.

3. Have you ever had an epileptic seizure?

This includes a:

- seizure due to diagnosed epilepsy
- seizure following a head injury (head injury increases the risk of seizure)
- a withdrawal seizure (for example, after withdrawing from alcohol).

It can be hard to tell if a person's seizures are epileptic or not. If the person is unsure of the cause of their seizures, but are sure they have had seizures, the response should be 'yes'.

4. Have you ever had a drug or medication overdose?

This includes overdose from any psychoactive substance, usually depressants like alcohol, opioids, and benzodiazepines. It can be intentional or accidental.

5. Did you ever have to go to hospital following an overdose?

This includes going to the emergency department or being admitted to hospital.

6. Did your mother use alcohol or other drugs when she was pregnant with you?

Many people will not know the answer to this question, in which case 'unsure' should be recorded.

7. Have you ever had a stroke or any other neurological conditions that might affect your thinking skills?

These include:

- ischaemic (blockage) or haemorrhagic (bleed) strokes, the latter is more common in young people
- multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- brain tumours
- dementia.

This does not include peripheral nervous system conditions such as:

- carpal tunnel syndrome
- prolapsed or herniated disc
- peripheral neuropathy (weakness, numbness or pain as a result of nerve damage).

8. Did you ever have learning difficulties, or have to attend special education classes at school?

This includes:

- struggling with reading, writing or maths when at school
- requiring extra assistance with reading, writing or maths when at school.

9. Have you ever been diagnosed with or suspected of having a developmental condition such as ADHD, Asperger's syndrome or a learning disability?

This includes any of the following conditions:

- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), count variations of the response, such as attention deficit disorder
- autism spectrum disorder, or Asperger's syndrome
- specific learning disorders, such as reading disorder, disorder of written expression or mathematics disorder
- intellectual disability
- conduct disorder
- cerebral palsy.

10. Did you repeat any grades at school?

This includes both voluntary and mandated repetition of any year of school.

11. Were you ever suspended or expelled from school?

This includes being suspended for any period of time from attending school.

12. Do you experience memory or other thinking difficulties?

This is based on the person's subjective judgement. For example, if they say, 'yes, but doesn't everyone?', mark it as a 'yes' response.

Scoring

Each response scores one. Add the number of 'yes' responses. This is the total score.

A score of three or higher indicates risk of cognitive impairment.

We recommend the brief executive function assessment tool (BEAT) be administered to further assess for the presence of cognitive impairment.

Optional questions

These questions may be asked by the examiner in order to inform the clinical assessment, but are not scored as part of the screening.

ACE screening tool


Question		Yes	No	Unsure
1	Have you ever lost consciousness following a blow to the head?			
	Optional question: If yes, how many times?			
2	Did you ever have to go to hospital following a head injury?			
	Optional question: If yes, how many times?			
3	Have you ever had an epileptic seizure?			
	Optional question: If yes, how many times or how often?			
4	Have you ever had a drug or medication overdose?			
	Optional question: If yes, how many times?			
5	Did you ever have to go to hospital following an overdose?			
	Optional question: If yes, how many times?			
6	Did your mother use alcohol or other drugs when she was pregnant with you?			
7	Have you ever had a stroke or any other neurological conditions that might affect your thinking skills?			
	Optional question: If yes, what was it and when did it occur?			
8	Did you ever have learning difficulties, or have to attend special education classes at school?			
9	Have you ever been diagnosed or suspected of having a developmental condition, such as ADHD, autism spectrum disorder (previously known as Asperger's syndrome) or a learning disability?			
10	Did you repeat any grades at school?			
11	Were you ever suspended or expelled from school?			
12	Do you experience memory or other thinking difficulties?			
	Optional question: If yes, since when?			
Total number of 'Yes' responses (don't include answers to the optional questions in the total)				

A score of three or higher indicates risk of cognitive impairment.


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Appendix 1



SMR060948

 <p>NSW Health</p>	FAMILY NAME	MRN	
	GIVEN NAME	<input type="checkbox"/> MALE <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE	
Facility:	D.O.B. ____/____/____	M.O.	
	ADDRESS		
<p>ALCOHOL & DRUG COGNITIVE ENHANCEMENT SCREENING TOOL</p>	LOCATION / WARD		
	COMPLETE ALL DETAILS OR AFFIX PATIENT LABEL HERE		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Alcohol and Drug Cognitive Enhancement (ACE) Screening Tool was developed to be administered by frontline alcohol and other drug workers to clients to identify risk of cognitive impairment. It is recommended that an examiner ask the questions exactly as they are written and record responses on the form. This allows the examiner to clarify questions if required. Each response scores one, add the number of 'yes' responses for the total score. The questionnaire includes optional questions that may be asked by the examiner in order to inform the clinical assessment. These questions are not scored as part of the screening. 		
Question	Yes	No	Unsure
1	Have you ever lost consciousness following a blow to the head?		
	<i>Optional Question: if yes, how many times?</i>		
2	Did you ever have to go to hospital following a head injury?		
	<i>Optional Question: if yes, how many times?</i>		
3	Have you ever had an epileptic seizure?		
	<i>Optional Question: if yes, how many times or how often?</i>		
4	Have you ever had a drug or medication overdose?		
	<i>Optional Question: if yes, how many times?</i>		
5	Did you ever have to go to hospital following an overdose?		
	<i>Optional Question: if yes, how many times?</i>		
6	Did your mother use alcohol or other drugs when she was pregnant with you?		
7	Have you ever had a stroke or any other neurological conditions that might affect your thinking skills?		
	<i>Optional Question: if yes, what was it and when did it occur?</i>		
8	Did you ever have learning difficulties, or have to attend special education classes at school?		
9	Have you ever been diagnosed or suspected of having a developmental condition such as; ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder (previously known as Asperger's Syndrome) or a learning disability?		
10	Did you repeat any grades at school?		
11	Were you ever suspended or expelled from school?		
12	Do you experience memory or other thinking difficulties?		
	<i>Optional Question: if yes, since when?</i>		
Total Number of 'yes' responses			
<p>A score of 3 or higher indicates a risk of cognitive impairment. It is recommended the ACE Brief Executive Function Assessment Tool (BEAT) be administered to further assess for the presence of cognitive impairment</p>			
<p>For additional information refer to: Alcohol and Drug Cognitive Enhancement, (ACE) screening tool and user guide (aci.health.nsw.gov.au)</p>			
Print name: _____		Signature: _____	
Designation: _____		Date: ____/____/____	
<p>ACE Alcohol and Drug Cognitive Enhancement (ACE) Program Screening Tool. NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation and Advanced Neuropsychological Treatment Services 2021.</p>			

ALCOHOL & DRUG COGNITIVE ENHANCEMENT SCREENING TOOL

SMR060.948

Holes Punched as per AS2828.1: 2019

BINDING MARGIN - NO WRITING

NO WRITING

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The Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI) is the lead agency for innovation in clinical care.

We bring consumers, clinicians and healthcare managers together to support the design, assessment and implementation of clinical innovations across the NSW public health system to change the way that care is delivered.

The ACI's clinical networks, institutes and taskforces are chaired by senior clinicians and consumers who have a keen interest and track record in innovative clinical care.

We also work closely with the Ministry of Health and the four other pillars of NSW Health to pilot, scale and spread solutions to healthcare system-wide challenges. We seek to improve the care and outcomes for patients by re-designing and transforming the NSW public health system.

Our innovations are:

- person-centred
- clinically-led
- evidence-based
- value-driven.

aci.health.nsw.gov.au

Our vision is to create the future of healthcare, and healthier futures for the people of NSW.

