

Pediatric Symptom Checklist

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCORING

The Pediatric Symptom Checklist is a psychosocial screen designed to facilitate the recognition of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral problems so that appropriate interventions can be initiated as early as possible. Included here are two versions, the parent-completed version (PSC) and the youth self-report (Y-PSC). The Y-PSC can be administered to adolescents ages 11 and up.

The PSC consists of 35 items that are rated as “Never,” “Sometimes,” or “Often” present and scored 0, 1, and 2, respectively. The total score is calculated by adding together the score for each of the 35 items. For children and adolescents ages 6 through 16, a cutoff score of 28 or higher indicates psychological impairment. For children ages 4 and 5, the PSC cutoff score is 24 or higher (Little et al., 1994; Pagano et al., 1996). The cutoff score for the Y-PSC is 30 or higher. Items that are left blank are simply ignored (i.e., score equals 0). If four or more items are left blank, the questionnaire is considered invalid.

HOW TO INTERPRET THE PSC OR Y-PSC

A positive score on the PSC or Y-PSC suggests the need for further evaluation by a qualified health (e.g., M.D., R.N.) or mental health (e.g., Ph.D., L.I.C.S.W.) professional. Both false positives and false negatives occur, and only an experienced health professional should interpret a positive PSC or Y-PSC score as anything other than a suggestion that further evaluation may be helpful. Data from past studies using the PSC and Y-PSC indicate that two out of three children and adolescents who screen positive on the PSC or Y-PSC will be correctly identified as having moderate to serious impairment in psychosocial functioning. The one child or adolescent “incorrectly” identified usually has at least mild impairment, although a small percentage of children and adolescents turn out to have very little or no impairment (e.g., an adequately functioning child or adolescent of an overly anxious parent). Data on PSC and Y-PSC negative screens indicate 95 percent accuracy, which, although statistically adequate, still means that 1 out of 20 children and adolescents rated as functioning adequately may actually be impaired. The inevitability of both false-positive and false-negative screens underscores the importance of experienced clinical judgment in interpreting PSC scores. Therefore, it is especially important for parents or other laypeople who administer the form to consult with a licensed professional if their child receives a PSC or Y-PSC positive score.

For more information, visit the Web site: <http://psc.partners.org>.

REFERENCES

- Jellinek MS, Murphy JM, Little M, et al. 1999. Use of the Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC) to screen for psychosocial problems in pediatric primary care: A national feasibility study. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 153(3):254–260.
- Jellinek MS, Murphy JM, Robinson J, et al. 1988. Pediatric Symptom Checklist: Screening school-age children for psychosocial dysfunction. *Journal of Pediatrics* 112(2):201–209. Web site: <http://psc.partners.org>.
- Little M, Murphy JM, Jellinek MS, et al. 1994. Screening 4- and 5-year-old children for psychosocial dysfunction: A preliminary study with the Pediatric Symptom Checklist. *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* 15:191–197.
- Pagano M, Murphy JM, Pedersen M, et al. 1996. Screening for psychosocial problems in 4–5 year olds during routine EPSDT examinations: Validity and reliability in a Mexican-American sample. *Clinical Pediatrics* 35(3):139–146.

Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC)

Emotional and physical health go together in children. Because parents are often the first to notice a problem with their child's behavior, emotions, or learning, you may help your child get the best care possible by answering these questions. Please indicate which statement best describes your child.

Please mark under the heading that best describes your child:

| | | Never | Sometimes | Often |
|---|----|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1. Complains of aches and pains | 1 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Spends more time alone | 2 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Tires easily, has little energy | 3 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Fidgety, unable to sit still | 4 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Has trouble with teacher | 5 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Less interested in school | 6 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Acts as if driven by a motor | 7 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Daydreams too much | 8 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. Distracted easily | 9 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Is afraid of new situations | 10 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 11. Feels sad, unhappy | 11 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 12. Is irritable, angry | 12 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 13. Feels hopeless | 13 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 14. Has trouble concentrating | 14 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 15. Less interested in friends | 15 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 16. Fights with other children | 16 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 17. Absent from school | 17 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 18. School grades dropping | 18 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 19. Is down on him or herself | 19 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 20. Visits the doctor with doctor finding nothing wrong | 20 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 21. Has trouble sleeping | 21 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 22. Worries a lot | 22 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 23. Wants to be with you more than before | 23 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 24. Feels he or she is bad | 24 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 25. Takes unnecessary risks | 25 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 26. Gets hurt frequently | 26 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 27. Seems to be having less fun | 27 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 28. Acts younger than children his or her age | 28 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 29. Does not listen to rules | 29 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 30. Does not show feelings | 30 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 31. Does not understand other people's feelings | 31 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 32. Teases others | 32 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 33. Blames others for his or her troubles | 33 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 34. Takes things that do not belong to him or her | 34 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 35. Refuses to share | 35 | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Total score _____

Does your child have any emotional or behavioral problems for which she or he needs help? () N () Y

Are there any services that you would like your child to receive for these problems? () N () Y

If yes, what services? _____

Pediatric Symptom Checklist—Youth Report (Y-PSC)

Please mark under the heading that best fits you:

| | | Never | Sometimes | Often |
|--|----|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1. Complain of aches or pains | 1 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Spend more time alone | 2 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Tire easily, little energy | 3 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Fidgety, unable to sit still | 4 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Have trouble with teacher | 5 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Less interested in school | 6 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Act as if driven by motor | 7 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Daydream too much | 8 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. Distract easily | 9 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Are afraid of new situations | 10 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 11. Feel sad, unhappy | 11 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 12. Are irritable, angry | 12 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 13. Feel hopeless | 13 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 14. Have trouble concentrating | 14 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 15. Less interested in friends | 15 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 16. Fight with other children | 16 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 17. Absent from school | 17 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 18. School grades dropping | 18 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 19. Down on yourself | 19 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 20. Visit doctor with doctor finding nothing wrong | 20 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 21. Have trouble sleeping | 21 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 22. Worry a lot | 22 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 23. Want to be with parent more than before | 23 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 24. Feel that you are bad | 24 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 25. Take unnecessary risks | 25 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 26. Get hurt frequently | 26 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 27. Seem to be having less fun | 27 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 28. Act younger than children your age | 28 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 29. Do not listen to rules | 29 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 30. Do not show feelings | 30 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 31. Do not understand other people's feelings | 31 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 32. Tease others | 32 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 33. Blame others for your troubles | 33 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 34. Take things that do not belong to you | 34 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 35. Refuse to share | 35 | _____ | _____ | _____ |