

## Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS)

The wording of the items can be adapted to cover different types of drugs by modification of the reference to the named drug.<sup>[2]</sup> Below is the generic version of the Severity of Dependence Scale.

Please tick (✓) one box for each question

Q1. Did you think your use of [named drug] was out of control?	Never or almost never <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Often <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Always <input type="checkbox"/> 3
Q2. Did the prospect of missing a fix (or dose) or not chasing make you anxious or worried?	Never or almost never <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Often <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Always <input type="checkbox"/> 3
Q3. Did you worry about your use of [named drug]?	Never or almost never <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Often <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Always <input type="checkbox"/> 3
Q4. Did you wish you could stop?	Never or almost never <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Often <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Always <input type="checkbox"/> 3
Q5. How difficult would you find it to stop or go without [named drug]?	Not difficult <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Quite difficult <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Very difficult <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Impossible <input type="checkbox"/> 3
<b>Total Score</b>	

**Scoring and interpretation:** The five item SDS can be administered to screen for problem/risky use of a number of substances. Each question is scored either 0,1,2, or 3. A total score is calculated by summing the responses to all five questions. The minimum total score possible is 0, and the maximum total score possible is 15 (i.e. total score range: 0-15). A higher total score indicates a higher level of dependence. See below for cut-offs for various drugs.

**Cut-off SDS scores for various drugs of concern**

Drug of Concern	Cut-off	Reference
Alcohol	3 or more	Lawrinson, et al., 2007
Amphetamine	5 or more	Topp & Mattick, 1997
Analgesics	5 or more	Grande, et al., 2009
Benzodiazepine	7 or more	De Las Cuevas, et al., 2000
Cannabis	3 or more	Swift, Copeland & Hall, 1998
Cocaine	3 or more	Kaye & Darke, 2002
Ecstasy	4 or more	Bruno, et al., 2009
Heroin	5 or more	Gossop et al., 1995

**Tool citation:** Gossop, M., Darke, S., Griffiths, P., et al. The Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS): psychometric properties of the SDS in English and Australian samples of heroin, cocaine and amphetamine users. *Addiction*, 1995. **90**(5): 607-614.

**Score references:**

- Bruno, R., Matthews, A.J., Topp, L., et al. *Can the Severity of Dependence Scale be usefully applied to 'ecstasy'?* *Neuropsychobiology*, 2009. **60**(3-4): 137-147
- De Las Cuevas, C., Sanz, E.J., Padilla, J., and Berenguer, J.C. *The Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS) as screening test for benzodiazepine dependence: SDS validation study.* *Addiction*, 2000. **95**(2): 245-250.
- Gossop, M., Darke, S., Griffiths, P., et al. *The Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS): psychometric properties of the SDS in English and Australian samples of heroin, cocaine and amphetamine users.* *Addiction*, 1995. **90**(5): 607-614.
- Grande, R.B., Aaseth, K., Benth, J.S., et al. *The Severity of Dependence Scale detects people with medication overuse: the Akershus study of chronic headache.* *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, 2009. **80**(7): 784-789.
- Kaye, S. and Darke, S. *Determining a diagnostic cut-off on the Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS) for cocaine dependence.* *Addiction*, 2002. **97**(6): 727-731.
- Lawrinson, P., Copeland, J., Gerber, S., and Gilmour, S. *Determining a cut-off on the Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS) for alcohol dependence.* *Addictive Behaviors*, 2007. **32**(7): 1474-1479.
- Swift, W., Copeland, J., and Hall, W. *Choosing a diagnostic cut-off for cannabis dependence.* *Addiction*, 1998. **93**(11): 1681-1692.
- Topp, L. and Mattick, R.P. *Choosing a cut-off on the Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS) for amphetamine users.* *Addiction*, 1997. **92**(7): 839-845.

**Further information:** Fischer, J.A., Roche, A.M., and Duraisingam, V. *Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS): description, strengths and knowledge gaps.* 2021, National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA), Flinders University: Adelaide, South Australia.