

# Alcohol and drug screening

Use these screening tools to help identify alcohol and/or drug dependence in adults and adolescents.

## Red flags for alcohol/drug abuse

### Physical and behavioral symptoms

- > Evidence of current use/intoxication
- > Tremor/perspiring/tachycardia
- > Persistent cough (cigarette smoking is a risk factor)
- > Inflamed, eroded nasal septum
- > Trackmarks/injection sites
- > Dilated pupils
- > Engages in risky behavior, e.g., unprotected sex
- > Gunshot/knife wound
- > Suicide talk/attempt; depression
- > Frequent falls/unexplained bruises
- > Frequent hospitalizations
- > Marked fall in academic/extracurricular performance (adolescent)
- > Prescription drug seeking behavior
- > Diabetes, elevated BP, ulcers; non-responsive to Tx
- > Pregnancy (screen all)

### Laboratory indicators

- > Positive UA for illicit drugs
- > MCV – Over 95
- > Hepatitis A-B-C
- > MCH – High
- > GGT – High
- > Triglycerides – High
- > SGOT – High
- > Anemia
- > Bilirubin – High

## Screening questions

These CAGE questions can be used if you suspect a patient has a possible alcohol or drug dependency:

- 1 Have you ever felt you ought to cut down on your drinking?
- 2 Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- 3 Have you felt bad or guilty about your drinking?
- 4 Have you ever had an eye-opener to steady your nerves in the morning?

If your patient answers “yes” to two or more questions, there is clinically significant evidence of problems with drugs or alcohol.

Source: Ewing, J.A. Detecting alcoholism: the CAGE Questionnaire. JAMA 1984, 252:1905, cited at [http://pathwayscourses.samhsa.gov/aaap/aaap\\_4\\_pg15.htm](http://pathwayscourses.samhsa.gov/aaap/aaap_4_pg15.htm)

