Numeric Rating Scale (NRS) Instructions

Use the numeric rating scale (NRS) to assess pain intensity for older adults who are able to self-report. Self-report of pain is defined as the ability to indicate presence and/or severity of pain verbally, in writing, or by other means such as finger span, pointing, head movement, or blinking eyes to answer yes or no questions.

How to Use: Ask the older adult to point to, circle or state the number on the Numeric Rating Scale that best represents the intensity or severity of their pain. It is best to ask about pain NOW or CURRENT pain, rather than recall over the past.
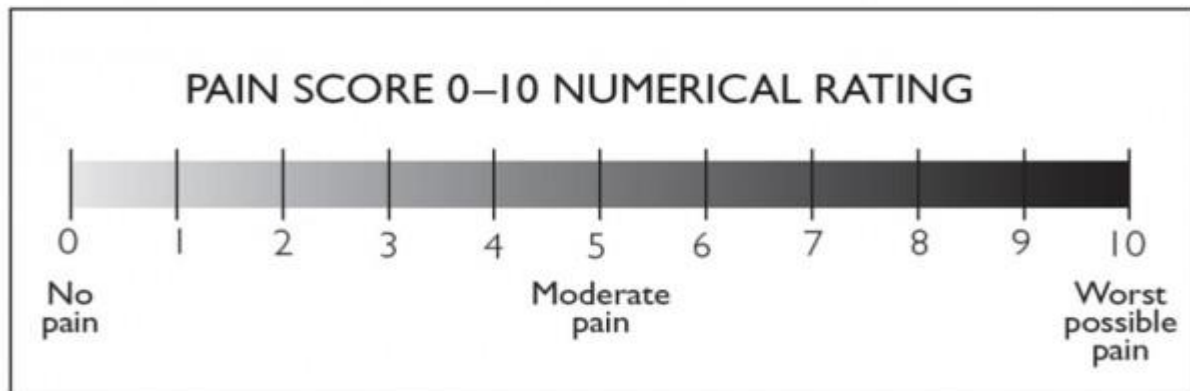
Interpretation: 0 = no pain, 1-3 = mild, 4-6 = moderate, 7-10 = severe. Evaluate initial pain and for increases or decreases in pain intensity after intervention. Combine with evaluation of impact of pain on function.

Documentation: Document/record all scores in a location that is readily accessible by other health care providers.

NUMERIC RATING SCALE (NRS)

Numeric Rating Scale Use: Have the individual point to, circle or state the number that best shows how bad their pain is now.

Numeric Rating Scale Scoring: Document the numerical value indicated by the patient. Evaluate the pain intensity over time to determine the effectiveness of pain treatments and need for changes in treatment.

PAIN SCORE 0–10 NUMERICAL RATING

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No pain — Moderate pain — Worst possible pain

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References

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