

Table 12-2 Selected Pain Scales

Name/Online Source	Scale Description	Age Range/Qualifiers	Validity/References
Self-Report Scales			
Verbal Descriptor Scale (VDS)	A list of phrases that represent different levels of pain intensity (e.g., "no pain," "slight pain," "mild pain," "moderate pain," "severe pain," "very severe pain," and "the most intense pain imaginable"); score may be descriptive or assigned a numeric value.	Literate children and adults; is the preferred pain scale for many older adults	Reliable and valid; Herr & Garand, 2001; Keck et al, 1996
Numeric Rating Scale (NRS)	Patient rates his/her pain from 0 to 10 (or 5 or 20), with 0 representing no pain and 10 (or 5 or 20) representing the worst possible pain.	5 years and older; is the preferred pain scale for many older healthy adults	Reliable and valid; Herr & Garand, 2001; Ho et al, 1996; Price et al, 1994
Visual Analogue Scale (VAS)	A single horizontal or vertical 10-cm line anchored by descriptors of pain at each end; patient marks the line at any point between "no pain" and "worst pain imaginable."	5 years and older; other scales are preferred by older adults	Reliable and valid, less so in younger children or adults with cognitive impairment. Ferrell, 2000; Herr & Garand, 2001; Ho et al, 1996; McCormack et al, 1988
Pain Thermometer (PT)	A variation of the VDS; picture of a thermometer along a continuum of adjectives describing pain or numeric rating marked from 0 to 10.	5 years and older; preferred tool for patients with moderate to severe cognitive deficits or abstract thinking or verbal communication difficulties; older adults prefer PT to the VAS or the NRS	Reliable and valid, even in persons with substantial levels of cognitive impairment; learning effect may emerge; Herr & Garand, 2001; Szyfelbein et al, 1985
Colored Analog Scale (CAS)	Horizontal or vertical ruler on which increasing intensity of red signifies more pain; numerical ratings are on the back	4 years and older; can be used at younger ages than VAS; converges to VAS at older ages	Reliable and valid, comparable to VAS and Faces Pain Scale; Bulloch & Tenenbein, 2002; McGrath et al, 1996
Poker Chip Tool	Four red poker chips; child chooses chips from 0 (no hurt) to 4 (most hurt one could have); ask how many "pieces of hurt" he has. Alternatively, child may place poker chips in a receptacle to indicate how much pain he/she is experiencing.	4.5-13.0 years	Reliable and valid; Beyer & Wells, 1989; Hester et al, 1990
Wong/Baker Faces Rating Scale http://www3.us.elsevierhealth.com/MCOW/faces.html	Cartoon drawings of facial expressions ranging from no pain to intense pain (crying). Subject selects the drawing that fits his/her level of pain.	3 years +	Reliable and valid; Bieri et al, 1990; Carey et al, 1997; Keck et al, 1996; Wong & Baker, 1988
Oucher Scale	Six photographs depicting facial expression of no hurt to biggest hurt; includes numerical 0-100 scale. Subject selects the photo image that fits his/her level of pain.	3-12 years	Reliable and valid; Beyer, 1984; Beyer et al, 1990; Beyer et al, 1992

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