

The BRFSS questions, or variations on that theme, are used in primary care. They are similar to the Q-F questions on the AUDIT. I think they would be a useful addition, with the caveat that for women the cut-point for binge drinking is 4 or more (there is disagreement on this, too). * Current guidelines for nonrisky alcohol use are 14 or fewer drinks per week for men and no more than 4 per occasion and 7 drinks per week for women with no more than 3 per occasion. (NIH publication no. 95-3769, printed 1995).

We (a collaborative led by the Medical Society and the Dept of Health) are producing a booklet for primary care physicians on dealing with alcohol problems. It is almost finished and will be distributed to all NM docs. Below is the section on screening instruments.

Brief Screening Instruments. The diagnostic standard for alcohol abuse and dependence, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV), requires a lengthy interview and is not practical for routine office use (*see Appendix for DSM-IV criteria*). This guide recommends one of four brief screens:

1. The four-question CAGE questionnaire (Mayfield, et al., 1974; Ewing, 1984). The CAGE has been the most popular screening instrument in the primary care setting with good sensitivity for alcohol abuse and dependence (74-89% and 79-95%, respectively) in the outpatient setting. The CAGE, however, is less sensitive for early problem or heavy drinking.
2. The PRIME-MD screen. The questions are somewhat similar to CAGE questions with the exception that the last question replaces “drinking in the morning” with a query about binge drinking in the last month. This helps improve the sensitivity of PRIME-MD to 81% (specificity 91%) and enhances the instrument’s value with respect to early problem or heavy drinking. A limitation of both shorter instruments includes lower sensitivity and specificity among young persons. Also, the CAGE is less appropriate for use among pregnant women because it focuses on alcohol dependency.
3. The RAPS4-QF (Rapid Alcohol Problems Screen 4-Quantity-Frequency) appears to be more sensitive than the CAGE (while maintaining good specificity) for identifying alcohol dependence and alcohol abuse, respectively, across gender, ethnic, and service utilization groups in the general population, and may be the instrument of choice for [\[EMS1\]](#) brief screening for alcohol use disorders, both in clinical populations and in the general population (Cherpitel, 2002).
4. The CRAFFT questions were designed specifically for use with adolescents in the outpatient medical office setting (Knight et al., 1999).

CAGE Questions.

- C** Have you ever felt that you should **Cut down** on your drinking?
No, go to next question.
Yes, ask has this occurred during the past year?
- A** Have people **Annoyed** you by criticizing your drinking?
No, go to next question.
Yes, ask has this occurred during the past year?
- G** Have you ever felt bad or **Guilty** about your drinking?
No, go to next question.
Yes, ask has this occurred during the past year?
- E** Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a Hangover? (**Eye-opener**)
No.
Yes, ask has this occurred during the past year?

Positive screen if one or more “yes” answers to “in the past year” questions.

PRIME-MD Questions.

- During the past month have you thought you should **Cut down** on your drinking of alcohol?
- During the past month has anyone **Complained** about your drinking?
- During the past month have you felt **Guilty** or upset about your drinking?
- Was there ever a single day in which you had **Five or more drinks (four or more for women)** of beer, wine or liquor?

Positive screen if two of more “yes” answers.

The RAPS4-QF Questions.

- During the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking? (Remorse)
- During the last year has a friend or family member ever told you about things you said or did while you were drinking that you could not remember? (Amnesia/Blackouts)
- During the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected from you because of drinking? (Perform)
- Do you sometimes take a drink in the morning when you first get up? (Starter/eye-opener)
- During the last year have you had five or more drinks (four or more for women) [\[EMS3\]](#) on at least one occasion? (Quantity)
- During the last year did you have a [\[EMS4\]](#) drink as often as once a month? (Frequency)

Positive screen if one or more “yes” answers.

CRAFFT Questions.

- C** Have you ever ridden in a **CAR** driven by someone (including yourself) who was “high” or had been using alcohol or drugs?
- R** Do you ever use alcohol or drugs to **RELAX**, feel better about yourself, or fit in?
- A** Do you ever use alcohol or drugs to while you are by yourself, **ALONE**?
- F** Do you ever **FORGET** things you did while using alcohol or drugs?
- F** Do your family or **FRIENDS** ever tell you that you should cut down on your drinking or drug use?
- T** Have you ever gotten into **TROUBLE** while you were using alcohol or drugs?
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