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| **Substance Use Risk Assessment** |
| **Interview Tool** |
| 1. **Initiate a discussion**   Consider initiating a discussion about alcohol and substance use if there are suspicious clinical signs, social issues (e.g., depression, domestic violence), concerns expressed by family members or caregivers, or as part of a routine introductory assessment. |
| 1. **Introduce the topic**   Find an appropriate way to introduce the topic of drinking and substance use. Some of these might include combining it with other screening questions, such as *“Are you allergic to anything, smoke, or drink*?” If a patient complains about symptoms associated with alcohol or substance use, consider suggesting *“We should look into that more. When do you experience those symptoms? Do you have such a feeling after you have had a drink?”* |
| 1. **Determine patient’s willingness to talk**   If the patient is unwilling to talk about drinking or substance use, it may be best to drop the subject and attempt to find other ways at another time to explore further. The patient must be willing to talk about the issue for the discussion to be successful. |
| 1. **Ask screening questions**   The following questions are common to many of the screening tools and can be modified for other substance use issues. As with the depression screening tools, before use of these tools determine if such interviewing is within the scope of practice for the credentials/licensure you hold. If not, or if you have any doubts, recommend that the patient’s primary care provider, a social worker, or other credentialed professional administer the screening.   * When talking with others, do you ever underestimate how much you drink? * After a few drinks, have you sometimes not eaten or skipped a meal because you didn’t feel hungry? * Does having a few drinks help decrease your shakiness or tremors? * Does alcohol sometimes make it difficult for you to remember parts of the day or night? * Do you usually take a drink to relax or calm your nerves? * Do you drink to take your mind off your problems? * Have you ever increased your drinking after experiencing a loss in your life? * Has a doctor or nurse ever said they were worried or concerned about your drinking? * Have you ever made rules to manage your drinking? * When you feel lonely, does having a drink help? |

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| 1. **Consider interventions**   Not all questions on a given screening tool need to be asked if it becomes clear that there is a problem. It is better to proceed to the interventions stage. Interventions might include:   1. Motivational interviewing 2. Decision balancing, which includes asking the patient to describe advantages and disadvantages of using alcohol or other substances. This process removes bias, helps build rapport, often leads to personal recognition of potential harms, and can help lead to further interventional discussions. 3. Brief interventions, which include quickly stating advice, being empathetic, and providing feedback about risky behavior. These can be very effective when performed by primary care professionals and may open the door to more specific forms of help. 4. Encouraging the patient to participate in Alcoholics Anonymous or other support groups if the patient is ready.   All patients with alcohol or substance abuse issues should be referred to a behavioral health specialist. |

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