

## Major Depressive Disorder (Mild, Moderate, or Severe) Documentation

Per CMS, the criteria for a major depressive episode includes five or more of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) symptoms present during the same two-week period. They represent a change from previous functioning, with at least one of the symptoms being either “depressed mood” or “loss of interest or pleasure.” **Do not document as “depression (unspecified).”**

### These daily symptoms include:

- depressed mood
- loss of interest or pleasure
- significant weight loss/gain or decreased/increased appetite
- insomnia or hypersomnia
- psychomotor agitation or retardation
- fatigue or loss of energy
- feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- diminished concentration
- recurrent thoughts of suicidal ideations or death

### Documentation of major depressive disorder requires the following:

- **episode:** single or recurrent
- **severity:** mild, moderate, or severe with/without psychotic features
  - PHQ-9 results may be used to determine severity
- **clinical status of current episode** (when applicable): partial or full remission

### Single episode:

- may last days, weeks, months, or longer
- chronic – duration of at least two years in an adult

### Recurrent episode:

- interval of at least two consecutive months between separate episodes
  - criteria is not met for a major depressive episode during this interval

### Severity:

- Screening tests, such as the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), do not diagnose depression but rather indicate severity of symptoms within a given period.

### Clinical status

- patient may or may not be currently treated for depression (counseling and/or medication)
- defined as a level of depressive symptoms basically indistinguishable from that of someone who has never been depressed.
  - this low level of signs and symptoms traditionally used as a guide to measure remission

Sources:

[NCA - Screening for Depression in Adults \(CAG-00425N\) - Decision Memo \(cms.gov\)](#)  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470645/>

**Contact information:** Julie Eisen, IHANY Risk Adjustment Coding Specialist [eisenjr@trinity-health.org](mailto:eisenjr@trinity-health.org) or Emily Smith, IHANY Risk Adjustment Coding Specialist, [Emily.Smith002@sphp.com](mailto:Emily.Smith002@sphp.com) (Updated Dec 2021)