

The McGill Pain Questionnaire

Overview: The McGill Pain Questionnaire can be used to evaluate a person experiencing significant pain. It can be used to monitor the pain over time and to determine the effectiveness of any intervention. It was developed at by Dr. Melzack at McGill University in Montreal Canada and has been translated into several languages.

Sections:

(1) What Does Your Pain Feel Like?

(2) How Does Your Pain Change with Time?

(3) How Strong is Your Pain?

What Does Your Pain Feel Like?

Statement: Some of the following words below describe your present pain. Circle ONLY those words that best describe it. Leave out any category that is not suitable. Use only a single word in each appropriate category - the one that applies best.

Group	Descriptor	Points
1 (temporal)	flickering	1
	quivering	2
	pulsing	3
	throbbing	4
	beating	5
	pounding	6
2 (spatial)	jumping	1
	flashing	2
	shooting	3
3 (punctate pressure)	pricking	1
	boring	2
	drilling	3
	stabbing	4
	lancinating	5
4 (incisive pressure)	sharp	1
	cutting	2
	lacerating	3

5 (constrictive pressure)	pinching	1
	pressing	2
	gnawing	3
	cramping	4
	crushing	5
6 (traction pressure)	tugging	1
	pulling	2
	wrenching	3
7 (thermal)	hot	1
	boring	2
	scalding	3
	searing	4
8 (brightness)	tingling	1
	itchy	2
	smarting	3
	stinging	4
9 (dullness)	dull	1
	sore	2
	hurting	3
	aching	4
	heavy	5
10 (sensory miscellaneous)	tender	1
	taut	2
	rasping	3
	splitting	4
11 (tension)	tiring	1
	exhausting	2
12 (autonomic)	sickening	1

	suffocating	2
13 (fear)	fearful	1
	frightful	2
	terrifying	3
14 (punishment)	punishing	1
	gruelling	2
	cruel	3
	vicious	4
	killing	5
15 (affective-evaluative-sensory: miscellaneous)	wretched	1
	blinding	2
16 (evaluative)	annoying	1
	troublesome	2
	miserable	3
	intense	4
	unbearable	5
17 (sensory: miscellaneous)	spreading	1
	radiating	2
	penetrating	3
	piercing	4
18 (sensory: miscellaneous)	tight	1
	numb	2
	drawing	3
	squeezing	4
	tearing	5
19 (sensory)	cool	1
	cold	2
	freezing	3

20 (affective-evaluative: miscellaneous)	nagging	1
	nauseating	2
	agonizing	3
	dreadful	4
	torturing	5

pain score = SUM(points for applicable descriptors)

How Does Your Pain Change with Time?

Question	Response	Points
Which word or words would you use to describe the pattern of your pain?	continuous steady constant	1
	rhythmic periodic intermittent	2
	brief momentary transient	3

Do the following items increase or decrease your pain?

- (1) liquor
- (2) stimulants such as coffee
- (3) eating
- (4) heat
- (5) cold
- (6) damp
- (7) weather changes
- (8) massage or use of a vibrator
- (9) pressure
- (10) no movement
- (11) movement
- (12) sleep or rest
- (13) lying down

(14) distraction (TV reading etc.)

(15) urination or defecation

(16) tension

(17) bright lights

(18) loud noises

(19) going to work

(20) intercourse

(21) mild exercise

(22) fatigue

How Strong is Your Pain?

Statement: People agree that the following 5 words (mild discomforting distressing horrible excruciating) represent pain of increasing intensity. To answer each question below write the number of the most appropriate word in the space beside the question.

Question	Response	Points
Which word describes your pain right now?	mild	1
	discomforting	2
	distressing	3
	horrible	4
	excruciating	5
Which word describes it at its worst?	mild	1
	discomforting	2
	distressing	3
	horrible	4
	excruciating	5
Which word describes it when it is least?	mild	1
	discomforting	2
	distressing	3
	horrible	4
	excruciating	5

Which word describes the worst toothache you ever had?	mild	1
	discomforting	2
	distressing	3
	horrible	4
	excruciating	5
Which word describes the worst headache you ever had?	mild	1
	discomforting	2
	distressing	3
	horrible	4
	excruciating	5
Which word describes the worst stomach-ache you ever had?	mild	1
	discomforting	2
	distressing	3
	horrible	4
	excruciating	5

Interpretation:

- minimum pain score: 0 (would not be seen in a person with true pain)
- maximum pain score: 78
- The higher the pain score the greater the pain.

References:

Melzack R. The McGill Pain Questionnaire: Major properties and scoring methods. Pain. 1975; 1: 277-299.

Stein C Mendl G. The German counterpart to McGill Pain Questionnaire. Pain. 1988; 32: 251-255.