

**Simplified Pain Scale**

**About this simplified pain scale**

**Context:** Expression of pain can be difficult for autistic people when asked to use vague pain scales. Below is an example of a pain scale which can be used during appointments to help explain the level of pain that you are in.

**Adaptations:** This pain scale can be adapted so that it best represents how you experience pain.

For example:

* How often or how long you have been experiencing this pain,
* Specific language that you would use to describe pain,
* Specific tasks that you are unable to do,
* Colour code the scale such as a traffic light system.

We can also adjust this for chronic pain and for specific episodes of pain.



**Note for practitioners**

Autistic patients can experience pain differently due to the way their internal senses are sometimes dulled by external senses e.g. Digestive pain could be present but muted by the input of an overwhelming external noise.

Also, remember that autistic patients can mask pain or display unexpected expressions when in pain, such as, smiling. To help better support your patients pain needs you will need to adapt your assumptions on what someone will act, look and sound like when in pain.

Please consider using this simplified pain scale alongside the Question Pattern Example resource for further support and guidance on how to help autistic patients.

Please also remember that autistic patients may use creative and personalised language to express their pain. If you can both form a shared understanding, then do support your autistic patient’s preferred pain terminology.



**Pain scale**

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| --- | --- |
| Crying face outline with solid fill | **Severe Pain*** The pain is intense and all I can think about.
* I am unable to manage the pain by myself.
* I am unable to do my daily activities.
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| Sad face outline with solid fill | **Moderate Pain*** The pain is causing me distress and I think about it most of the time.
* I am able to manage the pain, but I am still aware of it.
* The pain stops me from doing some of my daily activities.
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| Expressionless face outline with solid fill | **Mild pain*** I know I am in pain, but I don’t really notice it.
* I am able to manage the pain.
* I am able to do all of my daily activities.
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**Please note that the scales are designed to look at the impact on the individual rather than specific symptoms and where someone is on the scale can fluctuate over time.**