



Ascertaining the Burden of Social Determinants of Health in Your Patients

Where people live, work, learn, and play affects their health and quality-of life¹⁻⁴

Social determinants of health (SDOH) have five key domains:

- Health Care Access and Quality – access to health care, primary care, and medical insurance, and health literacy
- Economic Stability – poverty, employment, food security, and housing
- Education Access and Quality – graduating high school and higher education, language and literacy, and early childhood education and development
- Neighborhood and Built Environment – quality of housing, access to transportation, availability of healthy foods, air and water quality, and neighborhood crime and violence
- Social and Community Context -- community cohesion, civic participation, discrimination, workplace conditions, and incarceration
- SDOH contribute to wide health disparities and inequities. For example, people who live in polluted areas, work with toxic materials, or smoke are more likely to be exposed to carcinogens. That raises their risk of cancer and lowers life expectancy, relative to people who live in less toxic environments.
- To help clinicians screen patients for burdens of SDOH that might negatively impact their patients, the following questionnaire may be a helpful starting point.

Core Health-Related Social Needs Screening Questions⁵

The positive responses for a health-related social need are underlined.

Housing Instability

1. What is your housing situation today?

- I do not have housing (I am staying with others, in a hotel, in a shelter, living outside on the street, on a beach, in a car, abandoned building, bus or train station, or in a park)
- I have housing today, but I am worried about losing housing in the future.
- I have housing

2. Think about the place you live. Do you have problems with any of the following? (check all that apply)

- Bug infestation
- Oven or stove not working
- Mold
- No or not working smoke detectors
- Lead paint or pipes
- Water leaks
- Inadequate heat
- None of the above

Food Insecurity

3. Within the past 12 months, you worried that your food would run out before you got money to buy more.

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true

4. Within the past 12 months, the food you bought just didn't last and you didn't have money to get more.

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true

Transportation Needs

5. In the past 12 months, has lack of transportation kept you from medical appointments, meetings, work or from getting things needed for daily living? (Check all that apply)

- Yes, it has kept me from medical appointments or getting medications
- Yes, it has kept me from non-medical meetings, appointments, work, or getting things that I need
- No

Utility Needs

6. In the past 12 months has the electric, gas, oil, or water company threatened to shut off services in your home?

- Yes
- No
- Already shut off

Interpersonal Safety⁵

A value greater than 10 when the numerical values for answers to the following questions are summed indicates an increased risk for interpersonal safety.

7. How often does anyone, including family, physically hurt you?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Fairly often (4)
- Frequently (5)

8. How often does anyone, including family, insult or talk down to you?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Fairly often (4)
- Frequently (5)

9. How often does anyone, including family, threaten you with harm?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Fairly often (4)
- Frequently (5)

10. How often does anyone, including family, scream or curse at you?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Fairly often (4)
- Frequently (5)

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)*. <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/index.htm>. Accessed June 15, 2021.
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4. Yvette Colón. *Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Competency in Cancer Care*. <https://www.accc-cancer.org/docs/documents/oncology-issues/articles/2003-2016/2007/so07/so07-ethnic-diversity-and-cultural-competency-in-cancer-care.pdf> Accessed June 15, 2022.
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