

## Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale – Revised (CIWA-Ar)

The Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale – Revised (CIWA-Ar) can help determine the need for medically supervised withdrawal management in patients who are able to communicate symptoms to their providers. Research has shown that use of the scale in the treatment of withdrawal reduced the total amount of benzodiazepines needed and shortened the duration of treatment (Pace, 2024). The following scale has been adopted from Sullivan et al., 1989. Add the scores from each category and determine the level of alcohol withdrawal at the end.

<b>NAUSEA and VOMITING: Ask “Do you feel sick to your stomach? Have you vomited?”</b>	
<b>Observation.</b>	
0	No nausea and no vomiting
1	Mild nausea with no vomiting
2	
3	
4	Intermittent nausea with dry heaves
5	
6	
7	Constant nausea, frequent dry heaves, and vomiting
<b>PAROXYSMAL SWEATS: Observation.</b>	
0	No sweat visible
1	Barely perceptible sweating, palms moist
2	
3	
4	Beads of sweat obvious on forehead
5	
6	
7	Drenching sweats
<b>ANXIETY: Ask “Do you feel nervous?” Observation.</b>	
0	No anxiety, at ease
1	Mild anxiety
2	
3	
4	Moderately anxious, or guarded
5	
6	
7	Acute panic state, consistent with severe delirium or acute schizophrenia

<b>AGITATION: Observation</b>	
0	Normal activity
1	Somewhat more than normal activity
2	
3	
4	Moderately fidgety and restless
5	
6	
7	Paces back and forth during most of the interview, or constantly thrashes about
<b>TREMOR: Arms extended and fingers spread apart. Observation</b>	
0	No tremor
1	Not visible, but can be felt at fingertips
2	
3	
4	Moderate, with patient's arms/hands extended
5	
6	
7	Severe, even with arms not extended
<b>HEADACHE, FULLNESS IN HEAD: Ask "Does your head feel different? Do you feel pressure?" Do not rate for dizziness or lightheadedness. Otherwise, rate severity.</b>	
0	Not present
1	Very mild
2	Mild
3	Moderate
4	Moderately severe
5	Severe
6	Very severe
7	Extremely severe
<b>AUDITORY DISTURBANCES: Ask "Are you more aware of sounds around you? Are they harsh or frightening? Do hear things that you know aren't there?" Observation</b>	
0	Not present
1	Very mild harshness or ability to frighten
2	Mild harshness or ability to frighten
3	Moderate harshness or ability to frighten
4	Moderately severe hallucinations
5	Severe hallucination
6	Extremely severe hallucinations
7	Continuous hallucinations

<b>VISUAL DISTURBANCES: Ask “Does the light appear to be too bright? Does it hurt your eyes? Are you seeing things you know aren’t there? Observation</b>	
0	Not present
1	Very mild photosensitivity
2	Mild photosensitivity
3	Moderate photosensitivity
4	Moderately severe visual hallucinations
5	Severe visual hallucination
6	Extremely severe visual hallucinations
7	Continuous visual hallucinations
<b>TACTILE DISTURBANCES: Ask “Have you had any itching, pins and needles sensations, burning, numbness, or feel bugs crawling under your skin?” Observation.</b>	
0	None
1	Very mild paresthesias (itching, pins and needles, burning or numbness)
2	Mild paresthesias
3	Moderate paresthesias
4	Moderately severe hallucinations
5	Severe hallucination
6	Extremely severe hallucinations
7	Continuous hallucinations
<b>ORIENTATION AND CLOUDING OF SENSORIUM: Ask “What day is this? Where are you? Who am I?” Count forward by three.</b>	
0	Oriented and can perform serial additions
1	Cannot perform serial additions or is uncertain about the date
2	Disoriented for date by no more than 2 calendar days
3	Disoriented for date by more than 2 calendar days
4	Disoriented for place and/or person

<b>Total score is the sum of each item score (maximum score is 67)</b>	
<b>Score:</b>	
Less than 10	Very mild withdrawal
10 to 15	Mild withdrawal
16 to 20	Modest withdrawal
Greater than 20	Severe withdrawal

**Reference:**

Pace, C. (2024, February23). Alcohol withdrawal: Epidemiology, clinical manifestations, course, assessment, and diagnosis. UpToDate. <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/alcohol-withdrawal-epidemiology-clinical-manifestations-course-assessment-and-diagnosis>

Sullivan, J. T., Sykora, K., Schneiderman, J., Naranjo, C. A., & Sellers, E. M. (1989). Assessment of alcohol withdrawal: the revised clinical institute withdrawal assessment for alcohol scale (CIWA-Ar). *British journal of addiction*, 84(11), 1353–1357. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-0443.1989.tb00737.x>