

fact sheet

EPWORTH SLEEPINESS SCALE (ESS)

What is the Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS)?

- The ESS is a simple, self-administered questionnaire used to assess patient-perceived levels of sleepiness
- The ESS was developed by Murray Johns, MD, of the Epworth Hospital in Melbourne, Australia, to assist physicians in recognizing and diagnosing excessive sleepiness in their patients

How does it work?

- The self-administered test takes less than five minutes to complete and score
- It asks a person to rate the likelihood they would doze off or fall asleep during eight various, everyday activities such as reading a book, riding as a passenger in a car for an extended period of time or laying down to rest in the afternoon
- Scoring is based on a scale ranging from 0 to 3: 0 means a person would never doze during the activity; and 3 means there is a very high chance that a person would doze during that activity

Reading the Results

- Add together all the answers to get a score; the ESS has a possible score range of 0 to 24
- A total score of less than 10 suggests a person is not suffering from excessive sleepiness
- A total score of 10 or more suggests further evaluation is needed to determine the cause of excessive sleepiness or determine if an underlying sleep disorder may be present
- Because the ESS is a subjective measurement tool, it may be helpful to compare scores against common disease states known to have high incidences of excessive sleepiness.

For example:

- People who do not experience excessive sleepiness score about 5.9
- People with obstructive sleep apnea treated with CPAP score about 11.7
- People with untreated obstructive sleep apnea score about 16.0
- People with Parkinson's Disease score about 16.9
- People with narcolepsy score about 17.5

Reference

Johns, MW. A new method for measuring daytime sleepiness: the Epworth Sleepiness Scale. *Sleep* 1991; 14:540-5