

Pain Assessment with the Wong-Baker FACES Pain Rating Scale

The Wong-Baker FACES Pain scale is often helpful for assessing persons with moderate to severe dementia who have lost much of their ability to use language to describe pain. This scale uses faces from happy to tearful to demonstrate how a person might be feeling. It should be used only after the person in pain has demonstrated inability to understand the "0" to "10" pain scale.



To use this type of scale, show the card with the faces to the person. Explain to the person that each face is for a person who feels happy because he has no pain (hurt) or sad because he has some or a lot of pain. Point to each face and say what it means:

- Face 0 is very happy because he doesn't hurt at all.
- Face 2 hurts just a little bit.
- Face 4 hurts a little more.
- Face 6 hurts even more.
- Face 8 hurts a whole lot.
- Face 10 hurts as much as you can imagine, although you don't have to be crying to feel this bad.

Ask the person to choose the face that best describes how he is feeling.

A common error in administering this scale is to skip the description of one or several of the faces.

*Adapted from: Hockenberry MJ, Wilson D, Winkelstein ML: Wong's Essentials of Pediatric Nursing, ed. 7, St. Louis, 2005, p. 1259.