NCCN Distress Screening Tool Information

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Distress Thermometer is a validated, patient-reported screening tool used in oncology to identify emotional, psychological, social, practical, and physical concerns experienced by patients with cancer.

Key components

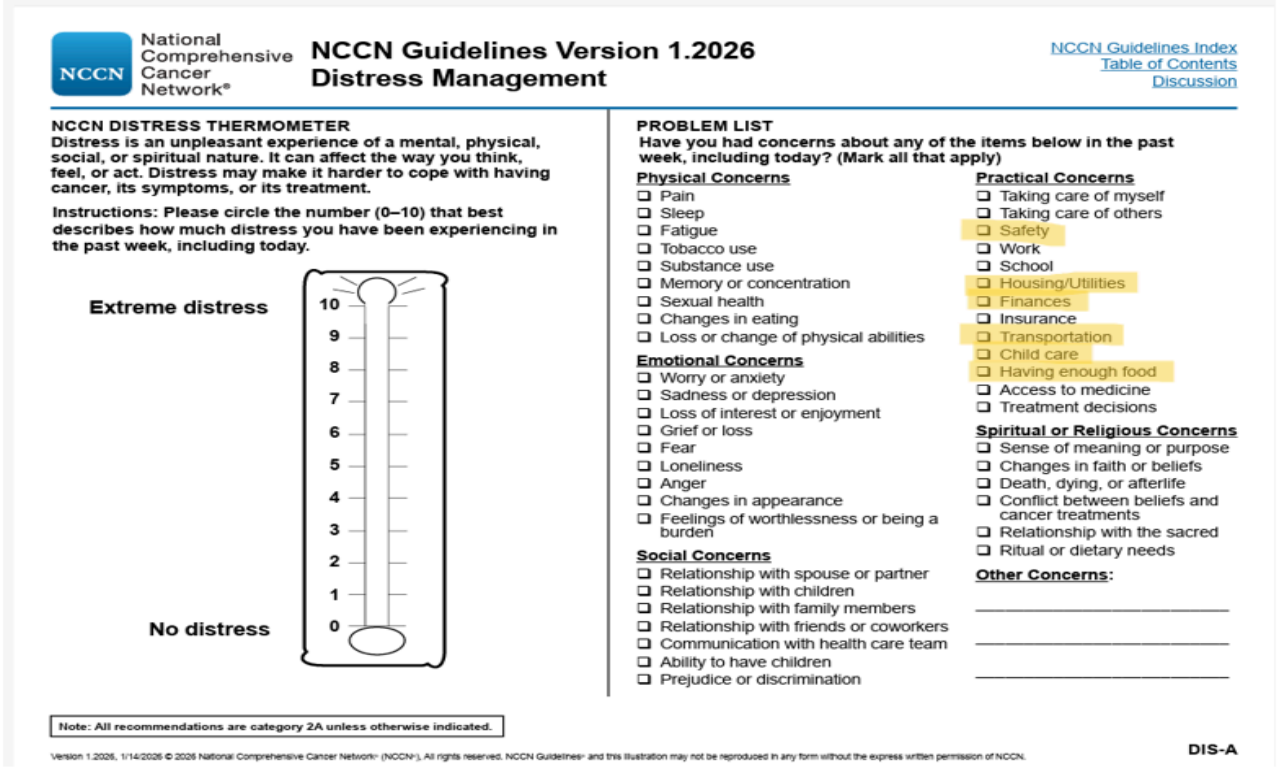
Distress Thermometer: Patients rate their distress over the past week, including the current day, on a scale from 0 to 10.

- 0 means no distress.
- 10 means extreme distress.
- A score of 4 or higher is commonly used as a threshold to identify patients who may need further assessment, although clinical judgment and local protocols also guide follow-up.

Problem List: Patients identify concerns they are experiencing, generally grouped into five categories:

★ **Practical: transportation, finances, work, housing, or childcare.**

- Family: concerns about children, relationships, or supporting loved ones.
- Emotional: worry, sadness, fear, nervousness, or loss of interest.
- Spiritual/religious: loss of meaning, faith-related concerns, or spiritual distress.
- Physical: pain, fatigue, sleep difficulties, nausea, or other symptoms.



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NCCN Guidelines Version 1.2026
Distress Management

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NCCN DISTRESS THERMOMETER
Distress is an unpleasant experience of a mental, physical, social, or spiritual nature. It can affect the way you think, feel, or act. Distress may make it harder to cope with having cancer, its symptoms, or its treatment.

Instructions: Please circle the number (0–10) that best describes how much distress you have been experiencing in the past week, including today.

Extreme distress

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

No distress

PROBLEM LIST
Have you had concerns about any of the items below in the past week, including today? (Mark all that apply)

Physical Concerns
- ❑ Pain
- ❑ Sleep
- ❑ Fatigue
- ❑ Tobacco use
- ❑ Substance use
- ❑ Memory or concentration
- ❑ Sexual health
- ❑ Changes in eating
- ❑ Loss or change of physical abilities

Emotional Concerns
- ❑ Worry or anxiety
- ❑ Sadness or depression
- ❑ Loss of interest or enjoyment
- ❑ Grief or loss
- ❑ Fear
- ❑ Loneliness
- ❑ Anger
- ❑ Changes in appearance
- ❑ Feelings of worthlessness or being a burden

Social Concerns
- ❑ Relationship with spouse or partner
- ❑ Relationship with children
- ❑ Relationship with family members
- ❑ Relationship with friends or coworkers
- ❑ Communication with health care team
- ❑ Ability to have children
- ❑ Prejudice or discrimination

Practical Concerns
- ❑ Taking care of myself
- ❑ Taking care of others
- ❑ Safety
- ❑ Work
- ❑ School
- ❑ Housing/Utilities
- ❑ Finances
- ❑ Insurance
- ❑ Transportation
- ❑ Child care
- ❑ Having enough food
- ❑ Access to medicine
- ❑ Treatment decisions

Spiritual or Religious Concerns
- ❑ Sense of meaning or purpose
- ❑ Changes in faith or beliefs
- ❑ Death, dying, or afterlife
- ❑ Conflict between beliefs and cancer treatments
- ❑ Relationship with the sacred
- ❑ Ritual or dietary needs

Other Concerns:
_____
_____
_____

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

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➢ **Abstractors should search for the NCCN Distress Screening Tool and select the following 7 non-medical need domains in MOQCLink if the patient has completed the screening within a year of their last office visit (there must be a documented screening date):**

1. **Safety**
2. **Housing**
3. **Utilities**
4. **Finances**
5. **Transportation**
6. **Food**
7. **Other (child care)**

★ Abstractors may encounter the NCCN Distress Screening Tool reported in EPIC with only the patient responses to the screening questions and the date. Because the NCCN Distress Screening is a standardized tool and we know what domains are addressed when screening patients, you may select the 7 domains mentioned above even if you are not able to see the specific questions to which the patient responded.

