

For patients with bipolar disorders or schizophrenia

DON'T LET AGITATION REACH ITS BOILING POINT. IDENTIFY IT PROMPTLY TO HELP PREVENT FURTHER POTENTIAL ESCALATION.¹⁻³

Agitation presents along a spectrum from mild to severe, displaying a diverse range of both physical and verbal behavioral signs.^{1,3,4} The Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale-Excited Component (PEC) represents a simple tool for evaluating agitation that utilizes 5 symptom categories for assessment—excitement, tension, poor impulse control, uncooperative, and hostility.^{3,5,6} Each category is rated on a scale of 1 (not present) to 7 (extremely severe). The total PEC score determines the severity of agitation: mild (5–13), moderate (14–19), or severe (20–35). Use this tool to help identify and assess the spectrum of agitation in clinical practice.^{3,6}

Agitation Assessment Tool

Rate each PEC category on a scale of 1 (not present) to 7 (extremely severe).^{3,6} Take the sum of the individual PEC scores to calculate the total score. Look for physical and verbal signs of agitation to help determine the rating.⁷

| PEC CATEGORY | SIGNS OF MILD AGITATION | SIGN OF MODERATE AGITATION | SIGNS OF SEVERE AGITATION |
|--|---|--|--|
| EXCITEMENT Hyperactivity displayed as increased motor behavior, response to stimuli, hypervigilance, or excessive mood lability ⁸ Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (circle one) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rocking⁹ Hand wringing⁴ Hair pulling⁴ Fiddling with clothes or objects⁴ Slightly pressured speech⁸ Foot tapping⁴ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throwing objects⁹ Pointing fingers⁹ Pacing¹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screaming³ Shouting⁹ No attention span³ Incoherent speech³ |
| TENSION Overt physical manifestation of fear, anxiety, or agitation ⁸ Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (circle one) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slight apprehensiveness⁸ Restlessness^{1,8} Rapid hand tremor⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nervous mannerisms⁸ Nervous shaking⁸ Clenching jaw^{8,10} Clenching fists^{8,10} Profuse sweating⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffering³ Behaviors relating to combat and escape³ Rapid restless pacing⁸ |
| POOR IMPULSE CONTROL Disordered regulation and control of action on inner urges ⁸ Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (circle one) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily angered⁸ Repetitive thoughts exhibited by vocalization⁴ Inappropriate behavior without clear purpose² | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episodes of verbal abuse⁸ Angered with minimal provocation⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threatening⁸ Demanding⁸ Destructive⁸ |
| UNCOOPERATIVENESS Active refusal to comply with the will of others (such as hospital staff or caregiver) ⁸ Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (circle one) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impatient⁸ Stubborn⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently incontinent⁸ Silence or refusal to communicate^{2,8} Defensive or negative attitude⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belligerent⁸ Outright refusal to comply⁸ |
| HOSTILITY Verbal and nonverbal expressions of anger and resentment ⁸ Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (circle one) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angry facial gestures^{3,8} Defiant and/or prolonged visual contact^{2,8} Sarcastic⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasionally verbally abusive or threatening⁸ Exaggerated gesturing^{2,8} Raised tone of voice^{2,8} Frequent irritability⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical/verbal aggressiveness^{2,8} Violent and destructive behaviors⁸ Self injury¹ |
| Total PEC Score: _____ (The sum of the individual PEC scores) | PEC score range: 5–13 | PEC score range: 14–19 | PEC score range: 20–35 |

REGARDLESS OF THE SEVERITY OF AGITATION, PROMPT ACTION IS NEEDED TO HELP THE PATIENT REGAIN CONTROL SAFELY AND COOPERATIVELY^{3,4}

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