

How best to **screen for alcohol problems** is an important unresolved issue. CAGE was one of the screening tools used in the study featured in Nugget 6.1 and is also integral to the screening strategy recommended by the US National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse in its *Physicians' Guide to Helping Patients with Alcohol Problems*. The strategy also incorporates questions on alcohol intake. Tested on adults attending a US emergency department, it identified 80% or more assessed as having recent alcohol abuse or dependence and correctly excluded roughly the same proportion who did not, much better than CAGE alone or just asking about consumption levels. Similar results were obtained for lifetime alcohol problems. The strategy requires staff only to remember recommended drinking limits and the mnemonic CAGE questions. There is no need for a schedule of questions and scoring rules as there is, for example, with AUDIT. However, AUDIT generally performs far better than CAGE at identifying problem

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drinkers and specifically does so in hospital settings. Whether it would outperform the US strategy has yet to be tested.

Featured studies Friedmann, P.D., et al. "Validation of the screening strategy in the NIAAA 'Physicians' Guide to Helping Patients with Alcohol Problems'." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*: 2001, 62, p. 234–238. Copies: apply Alcohol Concern. The *Physicians' Guide* ... is available at the web site of the US National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA). Download at www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/physicn.htm.