

# Discomfort Scale for Dementia of the Alzheimer's Type (DS-DAT)

Behavioral Indicators	Frequency (# of episodes in 5 min)	**Intensity low/high	Duration short <1 min, long >1 min.
<b>Noisy Breathing:</b> negative sounding noise on inspiration or expiration, breathing looks strenuous, labored, or wearing; respirations sound loud, harsh, or gasping; difficulty breathing or trying hard at attempting to achieve a good gas exchange; episodic bursts of rapid breaths or hyperventilation.			
<b>Negative Vocalization:</b> noise or speech with a negative or disapproving quality; hushed low sounds such as constant muttering with a guttural tone; monotone, subdued, or varying pitched sound with a definite unpleasant sound; faster rate than a conversation or drawn out as in a moan or groan; repeating the same words with a mournful tone; expressing hurt or pain.			
<b>Lack of Content Facial Expression:</b> pleasant calm looking face; tranquil, at ease or serene; relaxed facial expression with a slack unclenched jaw; overall look is one of peace.			
<b>Sad Facial Expression:</b> troubled looking face, looking hurt, worried, lost or lonesome; distressed appearance; sunken, "hound dog" look with lackluster eyes; tears; crying.			
<b>Frightened Facial Expression:</b> scared, concerned looking face; looking bothered fearful or troubled; alarmed appearance with open eyes and pleading face.			
<b>Frown:</b> face looks strained; stern or scowling look, displeased expression with wrinkled brow and creases in the forehead; corners of the mouth turned down.			
<b>Lack of Relaxed Body Language:</b> easy openhanded position; looking of being in a restful position and may be cuddled up or stretched out; muscles look normal firmness and joints are without stress; look of idle, lazy or "laid back" appearance of "just killing the day"; casual.			
<b>Tense Body Language:</b> extremities show tension; wringing hands, clenched fist, or knees pulled tightly; look of being in strained or inflexible position.			
<b>Fidgeting:</b> restless impatient movements; acts squirmy or jittery; appearance of trying to get away from hurt area; forceful touching, tugging, or rubbing of body parts.			
<b>Score</b>			

Adapted with permission from Hurley A et al, Assessment of Discomfort in Advanced Alzheimer's Patients. *Research in Nursing & Health*. 1992, 15, 369-377. John Wiley and Sons Inc.

This tool makes it possible to evaluate the frequency (from 0 to  $\geq 3$ ), intensity (high or low) and duration (long or short) of the nine indicators associated with discomfort, as perceived by the observer, in the course of an observation period usually lasting five minutes. The level of discomfort is then derived from the value attributed to these three components. Each of the nine items is evaluated independently on a scale from 0 ("no observed discomfort") to 3 ("high level of observed discomfort").

Scoring of Discomfort Scale for Dementia of the Alzheimer's Type:

Item Score	Frequency	Intensity	Duration
0	0	—	—
1	1	Low	Short
2	1	High	Short
2	1	Low	Long
2	2	Low	Short
3	$\geq 1$	High	Long
3	$\geq 2$	High	Short
3	$\geq 2$	Low	Long
3	$\geq 3$	Low	Short

Frequency: number of episodes during a five minute period

Intensity: Low = barely to moderately perceptible or

High = present in moderate to great magnitude

Duration: Short = < 1 minute and Long =  $\geq 1$  minute

Interpretation: higher the score = higher level of discomfort out of 0-27 points

Partially adapted with permission from Hurley A et al, Assessment of Discomfort in Advanced Alzheimer's Patients. *Innovative Rehabilitation for the Patient with Dementia*. S. Staples 2003