

Google launches 5-minute quiz to see if you're clinically depressed

7 September 2017, by Ethan Baron, The Mercury News

With 7 percent of American adults and 13 percent of adolescents believed to suffer from major depression, Google has just made it easy to check to see if you're afflicted with this mental illness.

The Mountain View search giant has just launched a tool for mobile devices that, with a one-word search and a couple of clicks, connects you to a clinically certified questionnaire that can tell you if it appears you have [clinical depression](#).

The process starts with a Google search for "[depression](#)," which brings up a box with an option to "check if you're clinically depressed." That takes you to the PHQ-9 "depression screening tool," a five-minute, nine-question questionnaire described by the U.S. National Institutes of Health as "a reliable and valid measure of [depression severity](#)" and "a useful clinical and research tool."

"Clinical depression is a treatable condition which can impact many aspects of a person's life," said Mary Giliberti, CEO of Google partner the National Alliance on Mental Illness, in an Aug. 23 guest post on Google's blog.

"The PHQ-9 can be the first step to getting a proper diagnosis."

The questionnaire asks users questions about their life in the previous two weeks, such as how often they've had "little interest in doing things" and how often they've felt "down, depressed or hopeless." Sleep patterns are also probed, along with feelings of tiredness, poor appetite or overeating, poor concentration ability, and thoughts of self harm.

Results from a recent test, with every question answered with for "several days" in the two weeks produced a result of "mild clinical depression is likely."

Under that result is a "What this means" section, that said, "You may feel more stress in your life

than usual" and advises that a doctor or mental health professional could help if the feelings persist or it's a matter of personal concern.

Answering "More than half the days" for every question brought a result saying moderately severe clinical depression was likely, and that therapy and medication could help.

Answering "Nearly every day" for every question produced a result of likely severe clinical depression, and made the same advice about therapy and medication.

Google told The Verge that the test isn't intended to replace a medical evaluation but rather to steer users to one if their results indicate possible depression.

The company said Aug. 23 the tool would be available on mobile across the country in the following day or so.

Google said that although some anonymized data from a user's answers could be used to improve the user's experience, the company would not store the answers or result.

Somewhat ironically, the launch comes as smartphones have been identified recently as a possible cause of teen depression.

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