

Maladaptive illness behaviour:

Health-related factor for workers with a *Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) – back pain*

Interpretation:

A maladaptive illness behaviour has a negative impact on return to work and can prolong the duration of absence of workers with a MSD (back pain).

Proposed measurement tool (★★★):

Clinical interview: Waddell's symptoms – 7 questions (Waddell et al., 1984).

Intended Workers:

This tool was developed to assess workers with back pain only.

Caution:

This factor can only be evaluated by accredited professionals. Venturing into the evaluation of this factor is therefore prohibited. If you suspect that this factor may be involved, you must rely on the professionals in question. Self-administration or the administration of a clinical interview by an unqualified person may lead to undesirable consequences such as the calculation of erroneous scores and the misinterpretation of results.

However, the elements (items or portion of interview) constituting this tool can provide additional information to other return to work actors or stakeholders, such as the actors from the organization (employer, human resources, supervisor, union representative, etc.). This allows for a better understanding of what the factor implies, which in turn can help to target some more specific elements or needs that would require (1) a possible intervention (using an accredited professional) or (2) adjustments of the organization, especially in terms of prevention.

Clinical interview: Waddell's symptoms

Some symptoms seem particularly inappropriate and linked to psychological characteristics. Here are the specific questions to identify them:

	No	Yes
(1) Do you get pain at the tip of your tail-bone?	0	1
(2) Does your whole leg ever become painful?	0	1
(3) Does your whole leg ever go numb?	0	1
(4) Does your whole leg ever give way?	0	1
(5) In the past year have you had any spells with very little pain? Note: This is an item for which the score must be reversed, as indicated in the right-hand columns. In fact, a patient who answers "Yes" (score = 0, not 1) indicates that symptoms fluctuate and that there are periods when the pain is minimal. Such a response would generally be considered less indicative of maladaptive illness behavior (score = 0).	1	0
(6) Intolerance of/reactions to treatment?	0	1
(7) Emergency admission to hospital with back trouble?	0	1

→ Final score (sum of positive symptoms): / 7 (possible range: 0 – 7)

Scoring instructions

Sum of positive symptoms, considering the inverted item, giving a total score ranging from 0 to 7.

Interpretation of scores

A greater number of positive symptoms indicates maladaptive illness behavior, which has a negative impact on return to work.