

Pain catastrophizing:

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

Interpretation:

Pain catastrophizing has a negative impact on return to work and can prolong the duration of absence of workers with a MSD.

Proposed measurement tool (★★★):

Pain Catastrophizing Scale – 13 items (Sullivan et al., 1995).

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 questionnaire by an unqualified person may lead to undesirable consequences such as the calculation of erroneous scores and the misinterpretation of results that may result.

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.

Pain Catastrophizing Scale

Everyone experiences painful situations at some point in their lives. Such experiences may include headaches, tooth pain, joint or muscle pain. People are often exposed to situations that may cause pain such as illness, injury, dental procedures or surgery. We are interested in the types of thoughts and feelings that you have when you are in pain.

Listed below are thirteen statements describing different thoughts and feelings that may be associated with pain. Using the following scale, please indicate the degree to which you have these thoughts and feelings when you are experiencing pain.

When I'm in pain ...	Not at all	To a slight degree	To a moderate degree	To a great degree	All the time
1. I worry all the time about whether the pain will end.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I feel I can't go on.	0	1	2	3	4
3. It's terrible and I think it's never going to get any better.	0	1	2	3	4
4. It's awful and I feel that it overwhelms me.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I feel I can't stand it anymore.	0	1	2	3	4
6. I become afraid that the pain will get worse.	0	1	2	3	4
7. I keep thinking of other painful events.	0	1	2	3	4
8. I anxiously want the pain to go away.	0	1	2	3	4
9. I can't seem to keep it out of my mind.	0	1	2	3	4
10. I keep thinking about how much it hurts.	0	1	2	3	4
11. I keep thinking about how badly I want the pain to stop.	0	1	2	3	4
12. There's nothing I can do to reduce the intensity of the pain.	0	1	2	3	4
13. I wonder whether something serious may happen.	0	1	2	3	4

→ Final score (sum of 13 items): / 52 (possible range: 0– 52)

Scoring instructions

Sum the scores to the 13 statements. The final score can then vary between 0 and 52.

Interpretation of scores

A higher score on this questionnaire means more pain-related catastrophic thoughts, which have a negative impact on RTW.

A score between the 50th and 75th percentiles, i.e. between 20 and 30, would indicate a moderate risk of developing chronicity. A score above 30 would indicate a high risk of developing chronicity.