

MADRS Documentation Cheat Sheet

Reviewed by the BastionGPT Clinical Advisory Board · September 2026 · Reproduces no scale items or anchors

The MADRS is a clinician-rated, ten-item depression severity scale (Montgomery and Åsberg, 1979), each item scored 0 to 6 and summed to 0 to 60, built to detect change during treatment. It measures severity and change, never diagnoses, and its bands, response rule, and remission cutoffs are later conventions, not parts of the instrument. Defensible charting names the version and rater, the interval, the item profile, the total with its convention cited, the baseline and change with the rule applied, and a separate risk assessment whenever the suicidal thoughts item is above zero.

Instrument, rater, and interview method clinician MADRS, SIGMA-guided, or MADRS-S

Do: name the instrument (clinician MADRS, SIGMA-guided, or MADRS-S), the rater's name, role, and training, and the language used.

Pitfall: "MADRS 27" with no version or rater; a MADRS-S total submitted where a payer or protocol asked for the clinician scale.

Interval rated original: any interval, recorded; SIGMA: past week

Do: state the period the rating covers and the days since the last rating; the MADRS-S covers about three days, so say so.

Pitfall: a bare total with no interval, or weekly and monthly ratings trended as if they covered the same period.

Item profile at the topic level which domains carry the total

Do: name the domains that drove the total and those that resolved; keep item scores on the flowsheet and never copy anchor text.

Pitfall: a total with no profile, or anchor descriptions pasted into the narrative as if they were the patient's words.

Total and the named convention x of 60; convention cited, not a diagnosis

Do: chart the total over 60 and any severity label with its source named; write it as severity and change, never as a diagnosis.

Pitfall: "MADRS 33, moderate depression" as a diagnosis, or a band presented as the scale's official interpretation.

Baseline, change, and the rule applied same method; absolute and percent change

Do: give the baseline date and total on the same method, the current total, the absolute and percent change, and the rule applied.

Pitfall: "responded" or "in remission" with no baseline, no percentage, and no rule; percent computed from the wrong visit.

Suicidal thoughts item and the separate assessment the item is a screen, not a risk assessment

Do: record the item rating; anything above zero triggers a separate dated risk assessment, filed in the risk section of the record.

Pitfall: risk inferred from an improved total, or the single item charted as the risk assessment.

Treatment context, decision, and companion records TMS week, esketamine phase, medication changes

Do: chart treatment status and medication changes since the last rating, the decision the score supports, and the separate REMS record.

Pitfall: a MADRS entered for a CMS or HEDIS remission measure that counts only the PHQ-9, or the REMS record folded into the score.

Before the note is signed

- ☐ Instrument, rater, and interview method named
- ☐ Interval rated stated for this rating
- ☐ Item profile described at the topic level
- ☐ Total given with its convention cited
- ☐ Baseline, change, and the rule applied
- ☐ Suicidal thoughts item followed by a separate assessment
- ☐ Treatment context and decision recorded

Drafting with AI

Give it the facts: instrument and guide, rater and training, the interval, item scores or the profile, the total, the baseline date and total, the rule your payer or protocol applies, the suicidal-thoughts rating with the separate assessment, treatment status, and the decision.

"Draft MADRS documentation: SIGMA-guided clinician MADRS, past week, rated by me 09/16; total 14 of 60; induction baseline 34 on 08/04, 58.8 percent reduction, plan's continuation rule met; suicidal-thoughts item zero, C-SSRS screener negative; esketamine maintenance week 12, REMS record filed separately; continuation requested."

Never paste patient-identifying information into consumer AI tools. BastionGPT is HIPAA-compliant with a signed BAA on every plan.

10 items, 0 to 60

clinician rated; higher is worse

Version and rater

the self report is a different form

Bands are conventions

name the source; never a diagnosis

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MADRS Documentation Template

Copy or print for your practice · Adapt fields to your organization's, payer's and jurisdiction's documentation requirements. Contains no scale items or anchors.

Setting: _____ Patient (initials): _____ Date: _____ Clinician: _____

Instrument + rater + interview method: _____ Interval rated: _____

Item profile

Which domains carry the total (observed and reported mood, tension, sleep, appetite, concentration, initiative, emotional response, pessimism, suicidal thoughts) · domains resolved · item scores kept on the flowsheet

Total and severity convention

Total ___ of 60 · severity label with its source named (Snaith and colleagues 1986, or the program's own convention) · a severity and change measure, not a diagnosis

Baseline and change

Baseline date and total on the same method · current total · absolute and percent change · response or remission rule applied, with its source: payer policy, protocol, or guideline

Interpretation

Congruence with the interview and collateral · minimizing or over-reporting noted with the judgment used · confounders: pain, medical illness, substances, sleep disorder

Risk (assessed separately)

Suicidal thoughts item rating · any rating above zero prompts a separate dated assessment · tool used (C-SSRS or other) · safety plan status · where the formulation is filed

Treatment context

TMS session number or esketamine phase (REMS session record kept separately) · medication changes since the last rating · adherence · other measures taken the same day

Decision and payer packet

Continue, intensify, taper, or change · baseline and current totals with the rule applied, for the authorization · PHQ-9 kept for any quality measure that requires it

Clinician (name and credentials): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____