



Top Tips to help you use the Clinical Frailty Scale

The Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS) was designed to summarise the results of a Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment. It's now commonly being used as a triage tool to make important clinical decisions, so it is imperative that it is used correctly.

#1 It's all about the baseline

If the person you are assessing is acutely unwell, score how they were 2 weeks ago, not how they are today.

#2 You must take a proper history

The CFS is an objective clinical assessment tool. Frailty must be sensed, described, and measured - not guessed.

#3 Trust, but verify

What the person you are assessing says is important, but should be cross-referenced with family/carers. **The CFS is a judgement-based tool**, so you must integrate what you are told, what you observe, and what your professional clinical experience tells you from dealing with older adults

#4 Over-65s only

The CFS is not validated in people under 65 years of age, or those with stable single-system disabilities. However, documenting how the person moves, functions, and has felt about their health may help to create an individualised frailty assessment.

#5 Terminally ill (CFS 9)

For people who appear very close to death, the current state (i.e. that they are dying) trumps the baseline state.

#6

Having medical problems does not automatically increase the score to CFS 3

A person who isn't bothered by symptoms and whose condition(s) doesn't limit their lives can be CFS 1 or 2 if they're active and independent.

#7

Don't forget "vulnerable" (CFS 4)

People in this category are not dependent (though they may need assistance with heavy housework), but often complain of "slowing down". They're becoming sedentary, with poor symptom control.

#8

Dementia doesn't limit use of the CFS

Decline in function in people living with dementia follows a pattern similar to frailty: mild, moderate and severe dementia generally map to CFS 5, 6 and 7 respectively. If you don't know the stage of dementia, follow the standard CFS scoring.

#9

Drill down into changes in function

When considering more complex activities of daily living (such as cooking, managing finances, and running the home) the focus is on *change* in function. A person who has always relied on someone else to perform a particular activity should not be considered dependent for that activity if they've never had to do it before and may not know how.

