

Priority Topic: **SOMATIZATION**

Key Features:

For a single source on this topic: [Somatic Symptom Disorder AAFP 2016](#)

1. In patients with [recurrent unexplained or confusing symptoms](#):

- a) [Do not attribute symptoms to somatization unless an adequate workup rules out any medical or psychiatric condition](#) (e.g. depression).
- b) [Reassess the symptoms periodically](#) as they may evolve into diagnosable medical conditions/mental health diagnoses or remain unexplained.

What you should study: workup will depend on presenting symptoms, but you should know how to diagnose somatization by DSM 5 criteria and differentiate it from other similarly presenting disorders.

✓ [Somatic Symptom Disorder AAFP 2016](#) **THIS is an EXCELLENT summary

If you want the DSM Criteria for Somatic Disorders: (available via McGill Library)

- ✓ [Conversion Disorder DSM 5](#)
- ✓ [Somatic Symptom Disorder DSM 5](#)
- ✓ [Illness Anxiety Disorder DSM 5](#)
- ✓ [Factitious Disorder DSM 5](#)
- ✓ [Other Somatic Disorders DSM 5](#)
- ✓ [Psychological Factors affecting other diagnoses DSM 5](#)

2. When a patient presents with symptoms that may be somatoform (e.g. caused by emotional distress), clearly distinguish between the stressed individual with somatoform traits and somatic symptom disorder by using established diagnostic criteria.

What you should study:

✓ Somatic Symptom Disorder DSM 5

3. In patients with a previously diagnosed somatic symptom disorder, do not assume that somatization is the cause of new or ongoing symptoms.

4. In patient who somatise, acknowledge the illness experience, and strive to find common ground with them concerning their diagnosis and management, including investigations.

What you should study:

✓ Somatic Symptom Disorder AAFP 2016 Table 4: CARE MD

5. When a patient presents frequently with medically inconsistent or confusing symptoms that are not worrisome:

a) Order investigations judiciously.

b) Educate the patient about the connection between physical symptoms and psychological distress.

What you should study:

✓ Somatic Symptom Disorder AAFP 2016 Table 4: CARE MD

6. In a patient with existing mental health conditions, do not dismiss new physical symptoms as somatization without appropriate assessment.

7. When caring for a patient with somatization, identify and manage your own emotional responses.

What you should study:

✓ Ten Strategies for Building Emotional Intelligence and Preventing Burnout AAFP 2018

8. When somatic symptom disorder has been established as the most likely diagnosis, recommend, and discuss evidence-informed psychotherapy and refer when appropriate, ensuring appropriate ongoing care and follow-up.

What you should study:

✓ Somatic Symptom Disorder AAFP 2016 Table 5: Summary of Treatment Options for Somatic Symptom Disorder

9. In patients who have somatic symptoms, [inquire about the use of and suggest therapies](#) that may provide symptomatic relief and/or help them cope with their symptoms.

What you should study:

✓ [Non-traditional approaches to enhance mental health care APA Blog](#)