

# Physical Assessment & Physical Examination

## Aspects of Physical Assessment

- Purposes of physical assessment
  - Screening of general well-being
  - Validation of complaints that caused patient to seek health care
  - Monitoring of current health problems
  - Formulation of diagnoses and treatments

## Assessment Techniques

- ▶ Inspection (I)
- ▶ Percussion (P)
- ▶ Palpation (P)
- ▶ Auscultation (A)

## Inspection

- Use of one's senses of vision and smell to consciously observe patient
- Careful observation
- Tangential lighting if necessary

## Palpation

- Act of touching patient in a therapeutic manner to elicit information

### ➤ Tips

- ▶ Warm hands
- ▶ Short nails
- ▶ Inform patient of when, where, and how the touch will occur

### ➤ Light palpation

- ▶ Superficial, delicate, gentle
- ▶ Use finger pads
- ▶ Depress 1 cm below surface
- ▶ Provides information on skin texture, moisture, masses, fluid, muscle guarding, and tenderness

## ➡ **Deep palpation**

- ▶ Reveals information about position of organs, masses, and their size, shape, mobility, and consistency
- ▶ Use hands
- ▶ Depress 4 to 5 cm below skin surface
- ▶ Most often used for assessing abdominal and reproductive structures

## **Percussion**

- ➡ Striking one object against another to cause vibrations that produce sound
- ➡ Any part of the body can be percussed
- ➡ Most commonly used for abdomen and thorax
- ➡ Analyze sounds by intensity, duration, pitch

## ➤ **Quality of Sounds**

- ▶ Flatness
- ▶ Dullness
- ▶ Resonance
- ▶ Hyperresonance
- ▶ Tympany

## ➡ **Techniques**

- ▶ Direct or immediate
- ▶ Indirect or mediate
- ▶ Direct fist
- ▶ Indirect fist

## **Auscultation**

- ➡ Act of actively listening to organs
- ➡ Listening to voluntary and involuntary sounds
- ➡ Quiet environment is needed
- ➡ Analyze sounds in relation to intensity, pitch, duration, quality, and location

## ➡ **Types of Auscultation**

### ➤ **Direct or immediate**

- ▶ Listening with the unaided ear

### ➤ **Indirect or mediate**

- ▶ Listening with an amplification device
- ▶ Examples: acoustic stethoscope, Doppler stethoscope

## ➡ **Commonly-Used Equipment**

📄 Pen and paper	📄 Sphygmomanometer	📄 Tuning fork
📄 Tape measure	📄 Stethoscope	📄 Reflex hammer
📄 Clean gloves	📄 Otoscope	📄 Lubricant
📄 Penlight	📄 Ophthalmoscope	
📄 Scale	📄 Visual acuity charts	
📄 Thermometer		

## **Preparing for a Physical Assessment**

- ✨ Clean, professional dress
- ✨ Wash hands
- ✨ Proper identification
- ✨ Adhere to Standard Precautions and Transmission-Based Precautions
- ✨ Short fingernails
- ✨ Position patient as needed
- ✨ Warm hands and equipment
- ✨ Avoid negative or crude remarks
- ✨ Hairstyle and jewelry that will not interfere with the exam
- ✨ Be cognizant of facial expressions
- ✨ Well-lit, warm, private, quiet room
- ✨ Proceed using a head-to-toe or other systematic approach
- ✨ Introduce self
- ✨ Thoroughly document findings
- ✨ Explain exam
- ✨ Thank patient when exam is concluded
- ✨ Dress patient in gown, drape, and underpants
- ✨ Have patient void before assessment

## Positioning for Physical Exam

### ➡ Fowler's

- ▶ High Fowler's or Semi-Fowler's
- ▶ Used to assess skin, head, neck, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, throat, thorax, lungs, heart, peripheral vasculature, neurological system

### ➡ Horizontal recumbent

- ▶ Used to assess breasts, heart, peripheral vasculature, abdomen, musculoskeletal system

### ➡ Dorsal recumbent

- ▶ Used to assess female genitalia, anterior thorax and lungs, breasts, axillae, heart and peripheral vasculature, abdomen, musculoskeletal

### ➡ Lithotomy

- ▶ Used to assess female genitalia and rectum

### ➡ Knee-chest

- ▶ Used to assess rectum and prostate

### ➡ Sims'

- ▶ Used to assess rectum and female genitalia

### ➡ Prone

- ▶ Used to assess skin, posterior thorax and lungs, hips

### ➡ Side-lying

- ▶ Used to assess skin, thorax and lungs, bedridden patients

## Golden Rules for Physical Assessment

- Stand on the right side of patient to establish a dominant side for assessment
- Use a head-to-toe approach
- Compare right to left sides of the body for symmetry
- Proceed from least invasive to most invasive
- Use a systematic approach