

General Examination Checklist

Preparation & Introduction (RIPE WIPE)

- ☐ Request chaperone
- ☐ Introduce yourself
- ☐ Permission
- ☐ Explanation
- ☐ Wash hands
- ☐ Interior (privacy, lighting, tools, temperature)
- ☐ Posture/positioning
- ☐ Exposure

General Observation — ABC LOOKSS + Unique

- ☐ Alert — conscious, alert, oriented, in distress
- ☐ Breathing — effort, rate
- ☐ Color — pallor, cyanosis, jaundice
- ☐ Lines/Kits — IVs, catheters, inhalers, insulin
- ☐ Odor (breath/body) — smoking, alcohol, sweet (DKA), fishy (CKD), moldy (liver disease), foul (GI), poor hygiene (psychiatric)
- ☐ Oxygen — nasal cannula, mask, O2 monitor
- ☐ Kachexia — body habitus, weight, stature
- ☐ Symmetry or deformities — bilateral symmetry check
- ☐ Sounds — stridor, wheeze

Unique Observations

- ☐ Apathy, anxiety
- ☐ Facial deformity
- ☐ Mouth deviation
- ☐ Gait, posture
- ☐ Speech

Vital Signs

Blood Pressure (normal 120/80, HR 60–100)

- ☐ Which limb
- ☐ Repeated
- ☐ Resting / not resting
- ☐ Hands at chest level
- ☐ Keep hand still

Respiratory Rate

- ☐ Better done with patient unaware (pseudo-pulse check)
- ☐ Count for a full minute

O2 Saturation

- ☐ Check on deep breaths
- ☐ Hands at chest level
- ☐ Keep hand still
- ☐ Wait 30–60 sec until reading stabilizes

Temperature

- ☐ Note site taken from
- ☐ Note device used

Weight / Height

- ☐ Calculate BMI

Face

- ☐ Facial plethora, swelling (e.g. SVC obstruction)
- ☐ Hair and eyebrow examination
- ☐ Eyes — pallor, jaundice
- ☐ Mouth — cyanosis, ulcerations, odor
- ☐ Tongue — size
 - ☐ Tongue — deviation
 - ☐ Tongue — fasciculations
 - ☐ Tongue — smoothness
 - ☐ Tongue — masses

Normal: Face symmetrical, without fullness or edema. Hair and brows normal. Sclera clear, mucous membranes pink, no cyanosis, ulcers, or odor. Tongue midline, appropriate size, no fasciculations, smooth, no lesions.

Hands

Inspection

- ☐ Deformities (ulnar deviation, swan neck [RA])
- ☐ Color — cyanosis (COPD), palmar erythema (liver disease, hyperthyroid), crease hyperpigmentation (Addison, Cushing)
- ☐ Arachnodactyly (Marfan's)
- ☐ Wasting — small muscle wasting (RA), thenar atrophy (CTS)
- ☐ Nail changes — leukonychia (malnutrition), koilonychia (IDA), pitting (psoriasis), splinter hemorrhages (vasculitis, IE)
- ☐ Tar staining (smoking)
- ☐ Clubbing (CA, emphysema, fibrosis)
- ☐ Dupuytren's contracture (liver disease, smoking)
- ☐ Coarse skin, broad hands (acromegaly)

- ☐ Tight, contracted skin, calcium deposits (scleroderma)

Normal: Hands symmetric without ulnar deviation or swan-neck deformities, no arachnodactyly, intact muscle bulk. Skin and nails unremarkable — no cyanosis, erythema, hyperpigmented creases, leukonychia, pitting, or splinter hemorrhages. No tar stains, clubbing, Dupuytren's contracture, coarse or tight skin changes, or calcific nodules.

Palpation

- ☐ Temperature (palmar and dorsal, bilaterally)
- ☐ Tenderness
- ☐ Pulse
- ☐ Capillary refill (normal < 2 sec)

Clubbing Tests

- ☐ Phalangeal depth ratio (IPD > DPD, ratio < 1.0)
- ☐ Hyponychial angle (< 160°)
- ☐ Shamroth's window (absent = normal)
- ☐ Nail bed fluctuation (absent = normal; should be firm, not compressible)

Neck Examination (Inspection, Palpation, Auscultation)

- ☐ Scars, masses, visible veins, abnormal posture
- ☐ Bruits (auscultate)
- ☐ JVP
- ☐ Thyroid

Normal: No scars, masses, visible veins, or abnormal posture. Carotid bruits absent. JVP normal. Thyroid non-tender, non-enlarged, no nodules.

Lymph Node Examination

General Principles

- ☐ Inspect for visible lymphadenopathy
- ☐ Palpate one side at a time using fingers of each hand
- ☐ Compare both sides

Assess

- ☐ Size
- ☐ Site
- ☐ Mobility (fixed or not)
- ☐ Consistency
- ☐ Tenderness

Cervical & Axillary Nodes (patient sitting)

- ☐ From behind — submental, submandibular, preauricular, tonsillar, supraclavicular, deep cervical (anterior triangle)
- ☐ Scalene nodes — finger between SCM and clavicle; patient tilts head to same side and presses down toward first rib
- ☐ From front — posterior triangle, back of neck, posterior auricular, occipital

- ☐ Axilla — fingertips in apex, draw down to feel medial, anterior, and posterior walls

Epitrochlear Nodes

- ☐ Support right wrist with left hand, partially flex elbow, feel with right thumb
- ☐ Repeat for left side with opposite hands

Inguinal Nodes (patient lying)

- ☐ Horizontal chain — just below inguinal ligament
- ☐ Vertical chain — along saphenous vein

Systemic Observations

Hydration Assessment

- ☐ Skin turgor loss
- ☐ Dry mucous membranes
- ☐ Decreased urine output
- ☐ Tachypnea or hypotension
- ☐ Edema — localized or generalized

Skin Examination

- ☐ Skin masses
- ☐ Jaundice
- ☐ Vitiligo
- ☐ Pallor
- ☐ Bruising
- ☐ Hypercarotenemia
- ☐ Cyanosis
- ☐ Hemochromatosis
- ☐ Ulcerations

Commenting on Lumps or Masses

- ☐ Size
- ☐ Site (position)
- ☐ Attachments
- ☐ Consistency
- ☐ Edge
- ☐ Surface and shape
- ☐ Pulsations, thrills, bruits
- ☐ Inflammation (redness, tenderness, warmth)
- ☐ Transillumination