Assisting with the Primary Physical Examination
Learning Objectives

- Define, spell, and pronounce the terms listed in the vocabulary.
- Apply critical thinking skills in performing patient assessment and care.
- Describe the structural development of the human body.
- Differentiate among the functions of the 11 body systems and the major organs and structures in each.
- Outline the medical assistant’s role in preparing for the physical examination.
Learning Objectives

• Summarize the instruments and equipment typically used by the physician during a physical examination.
• Describe the six methods of examination, and give an example for each.
• Outline the basic principles of properly gowning and draping a patient for examination.
• Compare and contrast the various positions that may be used during an examination, and identify the purpose of each.
• Position and drape a patient in six different examining positions while remaining mindful of patient privacy and comfort.
Learning Objectives

• Demonstrate proper body mechanics in transferring a patient from a chair to the examination table and back.
• Outline the sequence of a routine physical examination.
• Prepare for and assist in the physical examination of a patient, correctly completing each step of the procedure in the proper sequence.
• Summarize the role of the medical assistant in the physical examination process.
• Determine the role of patient education during the physical examination.
• Discuss the legal and ethical implications of the physical examination.
Anatomy and Physiology

• *Anatomy* is the study of how the body is shaped and structured.
  – structural development
  – levels of organization
  – relationships among microscopic parts
  – the interrelationship of structure and function

• *Physiology* is the study of body functions.
Systems

• A body system is composed of several organs and their associated structures, which work together to perform a specific function.

• Of 11 systems in the human body, each system has specific units, and each performs specific functions.

• Refer to Table 32-1 for the structures that make up the body systems and their functions.
What is a Primary Care Physician (PCP)?

- Treats patients of all ages for a broad range of diseases and complaints.
- Provides continuing healthcare services for the entire family, from birth to old age.
- Evaluates a patient’s total healthcare needs, provides personal medical care within one or more fields of medicine.
- Refers the patient to a specialist when an advanced or serious condition warrants additional expertise.
What is the Physical Examination?

• The purpose of a physical examination is to determine the overall state of well-being of the patient.

• Frequently, laboratory and other diagnostic tests are ordered to supplement the physician’s initial diagnosis.
Preparing for the Physical Examination

• The medical assistant’s duties include:
  – preparing and maintaining the examination room and equipment
  – preparing the patient
  – assisting the physician during the physical examination
See: Room Preparation: Procedure 32-1 in Book

- Check the area at the beginning of each day and between patients to make sure that it is completely stocked with equipment and supplies.
- Check expiration dates on all packages and supplies.
- Room should be private, well lit, and at a comfortable temperature.
- Clean and disinfect the area daily and between patients.
- Arrange drapes, gowns, and any other patient supplies before the patient enters the room.
- Prepare instruments and equipment needed for examination, and arrange these items for easy access before the physician enters.
- Room should contain all required materials for standard precautions.
Preparation for the Physical Examination
Patient Preparation

- Make sure the medical record is complete.
- Gather insurance information.
- Obtain specimens if preordered by physician.
- Measure and record height, weight, BMI, and vital signs.
- Conduct initial investigation into reason for the visit and explain the examination procedure.
- Have the patient empty the bladder before the examination.
- Gown and drape patient as needed.
- Assist patient into and out of examination positions as needed.
- Throughout the procedure explain what is happening, answer questions, and consistently maintain patient privacy and confidentiality.
- Document patient data in the medical record.
Assisting the Physician

• Hand instruments, equipment, supplies as requested.
• Provide appropriate light, adjusting as needed.
• Position and drape the patient.
• Collect and label specimens.
• Perform diagnostic procedures as ordered.
• Schedule postexamination diagnostic procedures.
Supplies and Instruments Needed for the Physical Examination

• Instruments typically are used during the physical examination to inspect, palpate, and auscultate parts of the body.

• All equipment must be in good working order, properly disinfected, and readily available.
Supplies and Instruments Needed for the Physical Examination

- Clean nonsterile gloves
- Gauze
- Lubricant
- Tape measure
- Fecal occult blood testing supplies
- Specimen collection system
- Antiseptic wipe
- Percussion hammer
- Tongue depressor
- Tuning forks
- Otoscope
- Ophthalmoscope
Supplies and Instruments

• Tongue depressor: Flat, wooden blade used to hold down the tongue when examining the throat.

• Reflex hammer: Sometimes referred to as a *percussion hammer*, this has a hard rubber head used to test neurological reflexes of the knee and elbow by striking the tendons.
Nasal Speculum

• Nasal speculum: Stainless-steel instrument used to inspect the lining of the nose, nasal membranes, and internal septum.
• Spreads apart to dilate the nostrils.
Tuning Forks

• The tuning fork is used to check a patient's auditory acuity and to test bone vibration.
• Consists of a handle and two prongs that produce a humming sound when the physician strikes the prongs.
Measuring Devices

• Tape measure: Flexible ribbon ruler usually printed in inches and feet on one side and in centimeters and meters on the opposite side.

• Used to assess infant length and head circumference, patient wound size, and so on.
6 Methods of Examination

1. **Inspection** is use of observation to detect significant physical features or objective data. Focus on the patient's general appearance (the general state of health, including posture, mannerisms, grooming)

   • Then on more detailed observations, including body contour, gait, symmetry, visible injuries and deformities, tremors, rashes, and color changes.
2. **Palpation** is the use of touch to determine the body’s condition or that of an underlying organ.

- Palpation may include touching the skin or the more firm feeling of the abdomen for underlying masses.
- Involves a wide range of perceptions: temperature, vibrations, consistency, form, size, rigidity, elasticity, moisture, texture, position, and contour.
Percussion

3. **Percussion** involves tapping or striking the body, usually with the fingers or a small hammer, to elicit sounds or vibratory sensations.

- To determine the position, size, and density of an underlying organ or cavity.
Auscultation

4. **Auscultation** uses a stethoscope to listen to sounds arising from the body and distinguish between normal and abnormal sounds.
5. **Mensuration** is the process of measuring.

- Measurements that are recorded are:
  - patient’s height and weight
  - the length and diameter of an extremity
  - the extent of flexion or extension of an extremity
  - the uterus during pregnancy
  - the size and depth of a wound
  - the pressure of a grip.
Manipulation

6. *Manipulation* is assisted passive movement of a joint to determine its range of extension or flexion.
Transferring a Patient

- Good body mechanics principles include maintaining balanced posture, bending knees while keeping the back straight, and using leg muscles to help lift.
- Move the wheelchair close to the examination table, lock wheels, and lift the foot rests.
- Support patient close to your body on the patient's strong side.
- Place step stool in front of the chair next to the side of the examination table, grasp the patient, anchor step stool with one foot, and help the patient step up onto the stool with the strong leg.
- Pivot the patient into a sitting position on the table.
Positioning and Draping for Physical Examinations

• The medical assistant instructs and assists the patient into positions with as much ease and modesty as possible.

• The MA will help the patient to maintain the position during the examination with as little discomfort as possible.

• Draping with an examination sheet protects the patient from embarrassment and keeps the patient warm.

• Refer to Procedures 32-2 to 32-7.
Fowler’s Position
Semi-Fowler’s Position
Supine Position
Dorsal Recumbent Position
Lithotomy Position
Sims’ Position
Prone Position
Knee-Chest Position
Trendelenburg Position
What to Examine in Sequence:

- Presenting appearance
- Nutrition and stature
- Speech
- Breath odors
- Skin
- Head
- Eyes, ears, nose, and mouth
Examination Sequence

- Neck
- Reflexes
- Chest
- Abdomen
- Breast and testicular examinations
- Rectum
Patient Education

• The physical examination process is an excellent time for the medical assistant to assess the need for patient education.
• The MA should consider:
  – The information that the patient needs to know
  – How to convey the information so that the patient will understand
  – How the patient will use the information once he or she has it
HIPAA Applications

• Prevent others from overhearing patient conversations.
• Keep privacy glass at front desk closed; turn your back away from the waiting room when talking on the phone; avoid any conversation that might be overheard.
• Place medical records on the examination room door with identifying information facing the door or if using electronic medical records close patient files and lock computers when not in use.
• Keep physician’s schedule away from patient areas.
• Must completely block previous patient names if sign-in sheets are used.