

# Basic physical examination

Supporting students to practise simple examination techniques



Undertaking a basic physical examination is a key assessment to help make a diagnosis or review a patient's condition. Allowing students the opportunity to practice these procedures is a vital part of their training. The basic physical examinations we ask our patient educators to participate in are simple: for example, taking a blood pressure; listening to your chest; listening for heart sounds or checking your

abdomen. It may also include examining for features related to particular conditions.

Students are always under the supervision of the clinical tutor and do not undertake any intimate examinations. We will ensure you know what to expect before attending the session, including how long it will last and how many students will be present.



## General tips

- Ensure you know what physical examination the students will be doing so you feel prepared.
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing.
- Make a note of how the student performs the examination so you can give some feedback at the end – for example did they introduce themselves; ask for your permission to do the examination; clean their hands before/after; consider your privacy and dignity; use medical jargon which made it difficult to understand?

## Giving feedback to students following a session

We are keen for Patient Educators to give feedback to students following a teaching session as this helps them to improve their practice. Feedback is best given immediately after something has happened so both parties remember what has occurred and should be given about things that can be changed and not things that can't.

- Ask the student what they thought went well or what they were particularly pleased with. You can also tell the student about something you thought went well. Always try to find at least one good thing to say and be specific - there is less value in saying that was 'very good' or that was 'not so good'. The feedback should address the good or poor performance of the student, for example: "I like the way you made me feel comfortable"; or, "you asked the questions in a very clear way"; or, "it would be better if you didn't use medical jargon as I didn't always understand what you were saying".
- Ask the student if they had any problems or if there was anything they were not happy with and why. You can also share aspects that you observed that did not go so well and how you think it could be improved.
- Your feedback could improve student practice so try to ensure that what you say can be seen and measured in some way; for example: "you seemed to have some difficulty listening to my heart. Normally, when my doctor does that, they put the stethoscope here".



## Health and safety

If you feel unwell on the day of teaching and can't attend the session, please just let us know. If you become unwell during a session, please alert the facilitator who will ensure you are looked after. The facilitator will let you know about general housekeeping and the location of fire exits before the session starts. If they don't, please ask for this information. Please complete the emergency contact form that is on our website and bring it with you to give to the facilitator at the start of the teaching session.