

Pelvic Examinations: Speculum, Assisting

Pelvic examinations, also known as vaginal exams, are used to obtain specimens for ruling out vaginal and uterine infections. Pelvic examinations are also used to aid in the diagnosis of intra-abdominal pathologic conditions in female patients with abdominal pain.

1.0 Guideline:

- 1.1 The person acting in the role of the assistant is usually a Registered Nurse working in OB Triage, however can be any RN working within the Mother Baby Unit.
 - 1.1.1 The primary function of the assistant is to place the patient at ease, explain what to expect during the exam, assist in the preparation of supplies, and anticipate the needs of the provider during the exam.
 - 1.1.2 It is important to note that not all pelvic examinations will include a bimanual examination or rectovaginal examination.
 - 1.1.2.1 The extent of exam will be dependent on the provider performing the exam and the patient's clinical picture.
- 1.2 The assistant will be located at the side of the patient during the exam performed by the provider.
- 1.3 Ensure that the patient is forewarned that she will feel her inner thigh being touched prior to the examiner inspecting the external genitalia.
 - 1.3.1 This is to allow the patient time to prepare for the exam so she is not startled.
- 1.4 Supply the provider performing the exam with warm water or lubricant to moisten the speculum.
 - 1.4.1 If cultures or specimens are to be obtained, warm water should be used on the speculum instead of lubricant.
- 1.5 The provider will first insert one or two fingers into the introitus with their non-dominant hand and then will insert a moistened, appropriately sized speculum.
 - 1.5.1 If the woman has a small introitus, a pediatric speculum may need to be utilized.

- 1.5.2 If a plastic speculum is used, advise the patient that she will hear a clicking noise when the speculum is locked.
- 1.5.3 Instruct the patient to take several deep breaths to encourage ease of insertion of the speculum.
- 1.5.4 The provider will gently insert the speculum into the vagina and slowly open the blades to expose the cervix and then lock the speculum into place.
- 1.6 If requested, provide the examiner a long swab stick or dry gauze dressing held by ring forceps to make visual inspection of the cervix easier.
- 1.7 Assist with specimen collection and transport of the specimen as specified by the laboratory.
 - 1.7.1 Specimens may include any one or more of the following:
 - 1.7.1.1 Papanicolaou smear
 - 1.7.1.1.1 If this is collected, it must be before any other specimen is obtained or lubricant used.
 - 1.7.1.2 Gonorrhea
 - 1.7.1.3 Chlamydia
 - 1.7.1.4 Gram's stain
 - 1.7.1.5 Potassium hydroxide (KOH) slide to look for *Candida* (yeast) organisms
 - 1.7.1.6 Wet mount (normal saline solution) to look for trichomonas or clue cells for bacterial vaginosis
 - 1.7.2 At the completion of the speculum exam, the speculum is withdrawn.
 - 1.7.2.1 If clinical need dictates, a bimanual examination will be performed at this time by the provider.
 - 1.7.3 If a rectovaginal exam is necessary, the provider will change gloves and add lubricant prior to the exam.

- 1.7.4 After the exam is complete, assist the patient in removing her feet from the stirrups and getting into a more comfortable position.
 - 1.7.4.1 Offer her a damp washcloth and towel with which to cleanse herself after the examination.
- 1.7.5 Inform patient that there may be slight spotting immediately after the examination.
- 1.7.6 Instruct the patient on how to obtain her laboratory test results and designate the person with whom she should follow up.
- 1.7.7 Provide individualized instructions based on the diagnosis.

2.0 Supplies:

- 2.1 Light source
- 2.2 Vaginal speculum (appropriately sized for the patient)
- 2.3 Lubricating jelly (water based)
- 2.4 Gloves (sterile and non-sterile)
- 2.5 Ring forceps with gauze dressings or long swab sticks
- 2.6 Specimen collection supplies may include any or all of the following, depending on the diagnostic test requested:
 - 2.6.1 Papanicolaou smear
 - 2.6.2 Potassium hydroxide (KOH)
 - 2.6.3 Wet mount (normal saline solution)
 - 2.6.4 Specimen slide with coverslips
 - 2.6.5 Gonorrhea or chlamydia transport media
- 2.7 Drape or sheet
- 2.8 Damp washcloth and towel

3.0 Documentation:

- 3.1 Time procedure was performed.

3.2 Who chaperoned if appropriate.

4.0 References:

4.1 Lippincott Procedure on speculum examination.

<http://procedures.lww.com/lmp/view.do?pId=951498&hits=speculum,examination&a=false&ad=false>

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