About this workforce competence

This workforce competence covers taking and recording physiological measurements as part of the individuals care plan.

Measurements include: blood pressure – both by manual and electronic; pulse rates and confirming pulses at a variety of sites eg pedal pulses; pulse oximetry; temperature, respiratory rates, peak flow rates; height; weight; body mass index (BMI); girth.

These activities could be done in a variety of care settings, including hospitals wards and other departments including out patients, nursing homes, the individuals own home, GP surgeries etc.

The recording of such measurements must take into account the individuals overall condition, and the delegation of these measurements to you may change as the individual's condition changes, and sometimes this skill will fall outside of your role and responsibility. Any adverse conditions may result in other members of the care team undertaking these measurements.

Links

This workforce competence links with the following dimensions and levels within the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (October 2004).

Dimension: Health and well-being 6 – assessment and treatment planning

Level: 1

Origin

This workforce competence has been developed for Clinical Healthcare Support by Skills for Health.
Unit CHS19
Undertake physiological measurements (Level 3)

Key words and concepts

Additional protective equipment
Includes: types of personal protective equipment such as visors, protective eyewear and radiation protective equipment.

Contaminated
Includes: items 'contaminated' with body fluids, chemicals or radionuclides. Any pack/item opened and not used should be treated as contaminated.

Individual
An individual is the person on whom the physiological measurement is being taken and could be an adult or a child.

Personal protective clothing
Includes items such as plastic aprons, gloves – both clean and sterile, footwear, dresses, trousers and shirts and all-in-one trouser suits.

These may be single-use disposable clothing or reusable clothing.

Scope

Appropriate documentation
Includes individual’s:
  a notes
  b charts.

Appropriately prepared
Includes: fully charged if electrical, with batteries, clean ear pieces on stethoscopes.

Equipment
Includes:
  a sphygmomanometers of electronic blood pressure
  b recording devices
  c stethoscope
  d thermometers including tympanic membrane sensors
  e a watch with second hand
  f pulse oximeter
  g documentation
  h charts.

Prescribed sequence
Includes:
  a lying and standing blood pressure
  b respiratory rate before and after medication such as broncho-dilators
  c temperature after procedures put in place to reduce raised temperature such as fan therapy, removing clothing/bed clothing.
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Prescribed time
Includes:
- hourly
- four hourly
- twice daily
- daily
- weekly
- before food
- before hot/cold drinks
- on return from operating theatre or other treatment/investigation.

Significant changes
Include:
- collapse
- cardiac arrest
- bleeding
- postural
- hypotension.

Standard precautions and health and safety measures
A series of interventions which will minimise or prevent infection and cross infection, including:
- hand washing/cleansing before during and after the activity
- the use of personal protective clothing and additional protective equipment when appropriate.

It also includes:
- handling contaminated items
- disposing of waste
- safe moving and handling techniques
- untoward incident procedures.
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Performance criteria
You need to:
1 apply standard precautions for infection control and apply other necessary health and safety measures
2 take the measurement at the prescribed time and in the prescribed sequence
3 use the appropriate equipment in such a way as to obtain an accurate measurement
4 reassure the individual throughout the measurement and answer questions and concerns from the patient clearly, accurately and concisely within own sphere of competence and responsibility
5 refer any questions and concerns from or about the patient relating to issues outside your responsibility to the appropriate member of the care team
6 seek a further recording of the measurement by another staff member if you are unable to obtain the reading or if you are unsure of the reading.
7 observe the condition of the individual throughout the measurement
8 identify and respond immediately in the case of any significant changes in the individuals condition or any possible risks
9 recognise and report without delay any measurement which falls outside of normal levels
10 record your findings accurately and legibly in the appropriate documentation.
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Knowledge and understanding
You need to apply:

Legislation, policy and good practice
K1 a factual awareness of the current European and national legislation, national guidelines and local policies and protocols which affect your work practice in relation to undertaking physiological measurements
K2 a working understanding of your responsibilities and accountability in relation to the current European and national legislation and local policies and protocols
K3 a factual awareness of the importance of working within your own sphere of competence when and seeking clinical advice when faced with situations outside your sphere of competence
K4 a working understanding of the importance of applying standard precautions and the potential consequences of poor practice
K5 a working understanding of why individuals need to be informed about what is happening
K6 a working understanding of what is meant by ‘consent’
K7 an in-depth understanding of why the recordings are necessary and the importance of undertaking measurements as directed.

Care and support of the individual
K8 an in-depth understanding of the help individuals may need before you can undertake the measurement
K9 an in-depth understanding of why it is necessary to adjust clothing for some physiological measurements.

Materials and equipment
K10 a working understanding of:
   a the equipment used for different measurements
   b any alternative equipment available
   c the importance of ensuring it is appropriately prepared.
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Procedures and techniques
K11 a working understanding of common conditions which necessitate the recording of physiological measurements within your work environment
K12 a working understanding of how blood pressure is maintained
K13 a working understanding of the differentiation between systolic and diastolic blood pressure and what is happening to the heart in each reading
K14 a working understanding of the normal limits of blood pressure
K15 a working understanding of conditions where blood pressure may be high or low
K16 a working understanding of how body temperature is maintained
K17 a working understanding of what normal body temperature is
K18 a working understanding of what is meant by pyrexia, hyper-pyrexia and hypothermia
K19 a working understanding of what is normal respiratory rate
K20 a working understanding of what affects respiratory rates in individuals, ill and well
K21 a working understanding of the normal limits of pulse rates
K22 a working understanding of what affects pulse rates – raising it and lowering it
K23 a working understanding of the sites in the body where pulse points can be found
K24 a working understanding of why an individual's pulse oximetry needs to be measured
K25 a working understanding of the findings when obtaining pulse oximetry, and the implications of these findings
K26 a working understanding of what BMI is and how it is used in weight/dietary control
K27 a working understanding of the factors that influence changes in physiological measurements.

Records and documentation
K28 a working understanding of the importance of recording all information clearly and precisely in the relevant documentation
K29 a working understanding of the importance of reporting all information to the registered practitioner
K30 a working understanding of the importance of immediately reporting any issues which are outside your own sphere of competence without delay to the relevant member of staff.
Unit CHS19
Undertake physiological measurements (Level 3)

Unit evidence requirements

Award title: Health Level 3
Unit number: CHS19
Unit title: Undertake physiological measurements

Evidence requirements for this unit:
You must provide your assessor with evidence for all the performance criteria and all the knowledge and those parts of the scope that are applicable to your work.

The evidence must be provided in the following ways taking into account any of the special considerations below.

Special considerations:
Simulation is not permitted for this unit.

The nature of this unit means that all of your evidence must come from real work activities.

The evidence must reflect, at all times, the policies and procedures of the workplace, as linked to current legislation and the values and principles for good practice in health.

Required sources of performance and knowledge evidence:
Observation and/or expert witness testimony is the required assessment method to be used to evidence some part of this unit.

If your assessor is unable to observe you s/he will identify an expert witness in your workplace who will provide testimony of your work-based performance. Your assessor or expert witness will observe you in real work activities and this should provide most of the evidence for the performance criteria in this unit. Your assessor will also decide what knowledge and understanding you have demonstrated through your work practice.

Other sources of performance and knowledge evidence:
The following performance criteria may be difficult to evidence by observation and/or expert witness testimony:

CHS19 performance criteria 5, 6, 8, 9
Your assessor will identify other sources of performance and knowledge evidence where observation or expert witness testimony has been used but your assessor needs to ensure that any outstanding performance criteria and knowledge requirements are met and that your performance is consistent.

- **Work products**: These are non-confidential records made, or contributed to, by you.

- **Confidential records**: These may be used as evidence but must not be placed in your portfolio, they must remain in their usual location and be referred to in the assessor records in your portfolio eg patient care plans and records, observation charts.

- **Questioning/Professional discussion**: Questions may be oral or written. In each case the question and your answer will need to be recorded. Professional discussion should be in the form of a structured review of your practice with the outcomes captured by means of audiotape or a written summary. These are particularly useful to provide evidence that you know and understand principles which support practice, policies, procedures and legislation, and that you can critically evaluate their application eg local policy on frequency of observation monitoring.

- **Original certificates**: Certificates of training, awards and records of attendance must be authentic, current and valid. Your assessor will also want to check the content of such training so that this can be matched to the standards and check that you have retained and can apply learning to practice.

- **Case studies, projects, assignments and reflective accounts of your work**: These methods are most appropriately used to cover any outstanding areas in the knowledge requirement of your award. Occasionally, because an event happens rarely or may be difficult to observe, you may be able to use a reflective account to provide some of the performance evidence for this unit eg an incident when a patient suffered a significant change and your actions; an occasion when you had difficulty obtaining a measurement, and your actions.

- **Witness testimony**: Colleagues, allied professionals, service users/patients and carers may be able to provide testimony of your performance. Your assessor will help you to identify the appropriate use of witnesses.