

CLINICAL SKILLS: EXAMINATION OF THE FOOT AND ANKLE

There are 6 main concepts that need to be remembered for ALL of the regional examination of the musculoskeletal system:

1. **Position** – always position your patient as you would like to examine them before you begin
 2. **Look** – inspect and observe the patient and around the patient's bedside
 3. **Feel** – for example, feeling a joint to see if it is hot or swollen
 4. **Move** – actively (the patient moves the joint) then passively (you do the movements for them)
 5. **Function** – can the patient move their joints in order to complete day to day tasks?
 6. **Special tests** – if applicable
- **Wash hands**
 - **Introduce yourself**
 - **Ask permission to examine the relevant part of the body**
 - **Expose the patient – ideally in underwear only, at least exposing the joint of interest and the joints above and below this**
 - **Reposition the patient – standing up at first**

Position :

- The patient standing up for looking, then lying down

Look:

- At the Achilles' tendon
- For ankle varus and valgus deformity
- Foot arch
- At dorsal and plantar aspect of foot
- Calyces
- Halluces valgus
- Claw toe
- At patient's shoes for abnormal wear patterns on the sole

Feel:

- Temperature
- Dorsalis pedis pulse (at the proximal end of the webbed space between the first and second toes)
- Palpate each metatarsal phalangeal joint for tenderness and swelling
- Ankle joint - palpate along the bony edges of the joint (anterior/posterior/medial/lateral)

Move:

- Passively and actively:
 - Ankle/foot eversion (sole of foot faces outwards)
 - Ankle/foot inversion (sole of foot faces inwards)
 - Ankle dorsiflexion
 - Ankle plantarflexion
 - Big toe flexion and extension

Function:

- Walk to end of room, turn and walk back
- Looking for normal heel-strike toe-off

To conclude the examination:

- Thank the patient
- Tell them they can get dressed now
- Offer to examine the joint above and the joint below
- Consider neurological examination of the limb examined

The complete examination of the musculoskeletal system includes:

- [Examination of the hand and wrist](#)
- [Examination of the elbow](#)
- [Examination of the shoulder](#)
- [Examination of the spine](#)
- [Examination of the hip](#)
- [Examination of the knee](#)
- [Examination of the ankle and foot](#)