

CLINICAL SKILLS: CUSHING'S SYNDROME EXAMINATION

Examining a patient for signs of Cushing's Syndrome involves an [general inspection](#) of the patient, along with a [systematic examination](#) of the main organs involved in the disease

- Wash your hands
- Introduce yourself
- Ask permission to examine patient
- Expose patient, preferably in underwear
- Reposition patient lying down

General Inspection:

- The patient as a whole (for the 'gestalt' picture of Cushing's syndrome):
 - For central obesity
 - For stooped posture (due to osteoporotic damage)
- Generalised changes over the body, including:
 - Easy bruising
 - Striae
 - Thin skin
 - Classical central fat distribution

Systemic Examination:

- Examine each of the following body parts separately: (as for the cardiovascular, respiratory and abdominal examinations, start with the hands)
 - Hands and arms for...
 - Bruising
 - Thin arms
 - Ask to measure blood pressure (would be raised)
 - Shoulder abduction power - reduced in proximal myopathy
 - Rheumatoid arthritis (suggesting an iatrogenic cause of the Cushingoid features)
 - Face for...
 - Rounded face (moon face)
 - Visible vessels on the cheeks suggesting thin skin
 - Greasy skin
 - Acne
 - Hirsutism
 - At this point you may wish to test Visual fields (looking for a bitemporal hemianopia that may be the result of an ACTH producing pituitary tumour pressing on the optic chiasm)
 - Shoulders for...
 - Supra-clavicular fat pads
 - Buffalo hump
 - Abdomen for...

- Central obesity
- Striae
- Bruising
- Renal transplant scars (patient may be on long term steroids which is causing the Cushing's syndrome)
- Legs for...
 - Skin ulceration
 - Ask patient to get up from a sitting position without using hands to test for proximal myopathy
- Spine for...
 - Spinal tenderness (may occur with osteoporosis if vertebral fractures)

To end my examination, I would like to:

- Do bedside tests:
 - Carry out a urine dipstick and check BM blood sugar at bedside (Diabetes Mellitus)
 - Check blood pressure if not already done (Hypertension)
- Inspect this patient's drug chart for any steroid use.
- Consider further investigations, such as a dexamethasone suppression test.