

CLINICAL SKILLS: EXAMINATION OF THE NEWBORN

Screening for abnormalities in the newborn. It should be performed within the first 24 hours of birth. It is an extensive examination that requires practice.

- **Wash hands**
- **Expose the baby - naked**
- **Reposition baby lying down**

Assess size

- Weigh baby
- Measure
 1. Head to toe length
 2. Head circumference

Take observations

- Heart Rate
- Respiratory Rate
- Temperature
- General appearance
- Colour, breathing pattern, tone

Assess skin

- Usually red, but may have blue colour at extremities, birthmarks or rashes
- Jaundice is pathological if seen in first day of life
- Erythema toxicum is benign. 50% children affected. Red lesions with yellow central papules are seen

Assess head and face

- Sutures and fontanelles - palpate
- Size
- Shape
 - Caput – crosses suture lines, resolves in several days
 - Haematoma – never crosses suture lines, caused by a Subperiosteal haemorrhage. 5% associated with underlying fractures
- Eyes
 - Discharge?
 - Appearance
 - Cataract
 - Assess for the red reflex with an ophthalmoscope
- Ears
 - Position
 - Skin tags
- Mouth
 - For a cleft palate
 - Symmetry
 - Size
- Neck
 - Palpate for thyroglossal cysts
 - Lymphadenopathy present in 33%

Assess torso

- Inspect
 - Pectus excavatum common and benign
 - Respiratory rate (should be 40-60 per minute)
- Palpate
 - Heart rate (should be 120-160 per minute)
 - For thrills

- Femoral pulses
- Auscultate
 - Heart murmurs
 - Breath sounds

Assess abdomen

- Inspect
 - Shape
 - Size
 - Distended?
 - Herniae
 - Umbilical cord appearance
 - For an umbilical hernia – normal finding in neonates
 - Umbilicus – 3 vessels? (if only 1 artery, think of renal problems)
- Palpate for size of internal organs – should be able to feel 1-2cm liver

Assess genitals

- Palpate for inguinal herniae
- Examine urethra position (?Hypospadias)
- Males: feel for testes in scrotum
- Female: assess if labia present (usually are swollen for first few weeks)
- Ensure anus is open

Assess limbs

- Length – proportionate?
- Hands and feet

Assess hips

- For dislocation
 - Ortolani test: Flex hips and knees to 90 degrees. Place thumbs on inner side of baby's knee, with index finger on greater trochanter. Adduct hips whilst applying forwards pressure. Can feel a click if dislocation occurs
 - Barlow test: Hips and knees flexed to 90 degrees, abduct the hip while applying backward pressure on the knee - you will feel a click if dislocation occurs

Assess spine

- Inspect and palpate spinal column. Are there any openings suggestive of spina bifida?

Assess nervous system

- Tone – pick up baby
 - Reflexes
 - Moro - startle newborn, so their legs and arms swing out and forward, with fingers outstretched
 - Rooting - baby turns mouth to face stimulus
 - Suckling - when nipple/object put into mouth, baby sucks
- **Thank the mother and dress baby.**