

Procedure #3: Assessing Body Temperature

PURPOSES

- To establish baseline data for subsequent evaluation
- To identify whether the core temperature is within normal range
- To determine changes in the core temperature in response to specific therapies (e.g., antipyretic medication, immunosuppressive therapy, invasive procedure)
- To monitor clients at risk for imbalanced body temperature (e.g., clients at risk for infection or diagnosis of infection; those who have been exposed to temperature extremes).

Equipment

- Thermometer
- Thermometer sheath or cover
- Water-soluble lubricant for a rectal temperature
- Clean gloves for a rectal temperature
- Towel for axillary temperature
- Tissues/wipes

Preparation

Check that all equipment is functioning normally.

Performance

1. Prior to performing the procedure, introduce self and verify the client's identity using agency protocol. Explain to the client what you are going to do, why it is necessary, and how he or she can participate. Discuss how the results will be used in planning further care or treatments.
2. Perform hand hygiene and observe appropriate infection prevention procedures. Apply gloves if performing a rectal temperature.
3. Provide for client privacy.
4. Position the client appropriately (e.g., lateral or Sims' position for inserting a rectal thermometer).

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Oral Place the tip on either side of the frenulum.



Rectal

- Apply clean gloves.
- Instruct the client to take a slow deep breath during insertion.
- Never force the thermometer if resistance is felt. Insert 3.5 cm (1.5 in.) in adults

5. Place the thermometer

- Apply a protective sheath or probe cover if appropriate.
- Lubricate a rectal thermometer.

Axillary

- Pat the axilla dry if very moist.
- The tip is placed in the center of the axilla.



Tympanic

Pull the pinna slightly upward and backward for an adult. Point the probe slightly anteriorly, toward the eardrum. Insert the probe slowly using a circular motion until snug



6. Wait the appropriate amount of time. Electronic and tympanic thermometers will indicate that the reading is complete through a light or tone. Check package instructions for length of time to wait prior to reading chemical dot or tape thermometers.

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7. Remove the thermometer and discard the cover or wipe with a tissue if necessary. If gloves were applied, remove and discard them.

- Perform hand hygiene.

8. Read the temperature and record it on your worksheet. If the temperature is obviously too high, too low, or inconsistent with the client's condition, recheck it with a thermometer known to be functioning properly

9. Wash the thermometer if necessary and return it to the storage location.

10. Document the temperature in the client record. A rectal temperature may be recorded with an "R" next to the value or with the mark on a graphic sheet circled. An axillary temperature may be recorded with "AX" or marked on a graphic sheet with an X.