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ABCDE assessment

Core Nursing Essentials Core Clinical Concepts

Airway, breathing, circulation, disability and exposure organize assessment of deterioration. Summon help early, address immediate threats and reassess after interventions.

For educational purposes only.

Introduction & key concepts

Airway, breathing, circulation, disability and exposure organize assessment of deterioration. Summon help early, address immediate threats and reassess after interventions.

Image reference: ABCDE learning framework: airway, breathing, circulation, disability, exposure. Call for help early and reassess. - /assets/essentials/abcde-learning-flow.svg

Original Nurses Content learning schematic.

Nursing responsibilities

- Check identity, consent, the relevant observations and the purpose of the assessment.
- Record the finding, context and response using the approved clinical record.
- Escalate uncertainty or deterioration to the responsible professional; do not use a study note as a standing treatment order.

Clinical example & examination focus

In a viva, explain abcde assessment in your own words, identify the observations needed and state a limitation. Compare the finding with the patient's baseline rather than assuming one number or label gives a diagnosis.

Quick Revision

Airway, breathing, circulation, disability and exposure organize assessment of deterioration. Summon help early, address immediate threats and reassess after interventions.

Frequently asked question

Can this summary replace practical training?

No. Use your prescribed learning material and the institution's current protocol with qualified supervision.

References & review status

- WHO-ICRC Basic Emergency Care (https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241513081) - 2018; course materials updated separately. ABCDE and recognition framework; original short synthesis, no copied diagrams.

Sources checked for the stated scope on 26 November 2026. Original study synthesis; independent clinical review is not claimed. Source attribution is not a copyright-clearance certificate.

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Original concise teaching synthesis. WHO-ICRC Basic Emergency Care (https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241513081)

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