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Head-to-toe assessment

Core Nursing Essentials Core Clinical Concepts

A systematic examination reduces omissions. Begin with general appearance, explain each examination, preserve privacy and compare findings on both sides where appropriate.

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Introduction & key concepts

A systematic examination reduces omissions. Begin with general appearance, explain each examination, preserve privacy and compare findings on both sides where appropriate.

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 head-to-toe 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

A systematic examination reduces omissions. Begin with general appearance, explain each examination, preserve privacy and compare findings on both sides where appropriate.

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

- Open RN - Nursing Skills 2e, head-to-toe assessment (https://wtcs.pressbooks.pub/nursingskills/back-matter/appendix-c/) - 2nd edition; accessed 26 November 2026. Systematic assessment concept only; the publisher's full checklist is not reproduced.

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