

Musculoskeletal Spinal Examination Checklist

Instructions: *Italicized information indicates what the student should be verbalizing.*

	Performed	Verbalized
<i>Washes hands FIRST and dons appropriate personal protective equipment.</i>	Y / N	
<i>Introduces self to patient using first and last name, including role.</i>	Y / N	
Notes general appearance and vital signs.		Y / N
General Appearance		
Note position of head and posture of neck and trunk (<i>assess for muscle spasm and abnormal positioning such as torticollis</i>)	Y / N	Y / N
Inspection		
Assess cervical, thoracic, and lumbar curves for increased or decreased concavity or convexity <i>note presence and degree of cervical and lumbar lordosis and thoracic kyphosis</i>	Y / N	Y / N
Assess for straight line from C7 through gluteal cleft <i>both standing and flexed forward at the waist; assess for lateral curvatures such as scoliosis</i>	Y / N	Y / N
Assess alignment of shoulders and iliac crests with patient standing erect and then in flexion, noting asymmetry <i>palpate iliac crests to be able to assess them accurately</i> Note ease of gait	Y / N	Y / N
Palpation		
Palpate spinous processes for tenderness or step-off <i>patient may be standing or sitting up straight</i>	Y / N	Y / N
Palpate cervical facets for tenderness <i>palpation may require relaxation of the trapezius muscle for optimal feel of the facets</i>	Y / N	Y / N
Palpate paravertebral muscles for tenderness or spasm <i>throughout the spine</i>	Y / N	Y / N
Palpate sacroiliac joints for tenderness	Y / N	Y / N
Palpate for tenderness in any other areas suggested by patient's symptoms	Y / N	Y / N

Percussion		
Fist percussion over spinous processes for tenderness <i>use caution with the amount of force applied</i>	Y/N	Y / N
Range of Motion <i>(be sure to have individual movements rather than single fluid movements to isolate various joints and muscle groups, but also watch the patient for smooth and coordinated movements)</i>		
Neck: flexion, extension, rotation, lateral bending Note location of localized or radiating pain or any limited range of motion	Y / N	Y / N
Spine: flexion, extension, rotation, lateral bending Note location of localized or radiating pain or any limited range of motion	Y / N	Y / N
Adequate exposure was maintained for all inspection steps.	Y / N	

Adapted from Albany Medical College, Center for Physician Assistant Studies | Bickley: *Bates' Guide to Physical Examination and History Taking*, Thirteenth Edition. Copyright © 2021 Wolters Kluwer Health