

SFHCHS20

Undertake examination of the external ear.



Overview

This standard covers examination of the individual's external ear only. It does not include further treatment that might be recommended following examination of the ear. The examination could be carried out in a variety of care settings, including hospitals – both for in and out patients, GP surgeries, nursing and residential homes, and in the individuals own home.

The term “individuals” is intended to cover adults and children, though there may be internal policies and protocols which restrict the group on whom you can perform ear examinations. Likewise this standard covers all care groups including the elderly, those with long term mental health problems, and those with learning disabilities.

Users of this standard will need to ensure that practice reflects up to date information and policies.

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Performance criteria

You must be able to:

- P1 apply standard precautions for infection prevention and control and other relevant health and safety measures
- P2 check the individual's identity and confirm the planned action
- P3 give the individual relevant information, support and reassurance in a manner which is sensitive to their needs and concerns
- P4 gain valid consent to carry out the planned activity
- P5 collect the equipment, ensure that it is in good working order, particularly ensuring that the batteries in the otoscope have sufficient power to produce a white light and securely attach a disposable or clean re-useable ear piece
- P6 report immediately to an appropriate member of staff any reasons why you cannot continue with the examination
- P7 position:
 - P7.1 the individual in such a way as to enable easy access to the ear for the examination
 - P7.2 yourself at the same level as the individual and in such a way as to be able to undertake the examination with the individuals safety and your comfort in mind
- P8 hold the equipment in a correct manner to ensure complete safety and comfort for the individual and allow the best visual field for you
- P9 look at the condition of the external ear and surrounding skin and note any abnormalities
- P10 choose the correct size speculum according to the size of the ear canal and attach it firmly to the otoscope
- P11 hold the pinna in the correct way to straighten the external ear canal and insert the otoscope gently and view the external ear, looking for any abnormalities
- P12 ensure you examine the ear thoroughly and cause as little discomfort as possible
- P13 remove the otoscope from the ear and remove the speculum and place ready for cleaning
- P14 tell the individual what you have done and if the ears are clear of occlusive blockage
- P15 note your findings, document these if appropriate, and report your findings to an appropriate member of staff for further action if there is a blockage of the canal
- P16 ensure the individual has suffered no adverse effects and allow them to return to an appropriate place and ensure they are comfortable

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

- K1 the current European and National legislation, national guidelines, organisational policies and protocols in accordance with Clinical/Corporate Governance which affect your work practice in relation to undertaking examination of the external ear
- K2 your responsibilities and accountability in relation to the current European and National legislation, national guidelines and local policies and protocols and Clinical/Corporate Governance
- K3 the duty to report any acts or omissions in care that could be detrimental to yourself, other individuals or your employer
- K4 the importance of applying standard precautions to undertaken examination of the external ear and the potential consequences of poor practice
- K5 the importance of working within your own sphere of competence and seeking advice when faced with situations outside your sphere of competence
- K6 the anatomy of the external ear
- K7 the anatomy of the middle and inner ear
- K8 why it is important to examine the external ear only
- K9 the signs and symptoms an individual may complain of which leads you and others to suspect a problem with the external ear
- K10 the types of hearing loss and how to improve communication with individuals who are hard of hearing
- K11 why you need to tell the individual what you are doing
- K12 the purpose of an otoscope and how it works
- K13 what you would do if the otoscope was not functioning properly
- K14 how to clean all types of re-useable equipment
- K15 why it is important to position the individual and yourself correctly for the examination
- K16 the safe way to hold and use the equipment and why this is important
- K17 why it is important to examine the external ear only
- K18 why it is necessary to record all your findings, and what you should record
- K19 the importance of immediately reporting any issues which are outside your own sphere of competence without delay to the relevant member of staff

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Additional Information

External Links

This standard links with the following dimension within the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (October 2004):

Dimension: HWB6 Assessment and treatment planning

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Developed by Skills for Health

Version number 1

Date approved June 2010

Indicative review date June 2012

Validity Current

Status Original

Originating organisation Skills for Health

Original URN CHS20

Relevant occupations Health, Public Services and Care; Health and Social Care; Managers and Senior Officials; Associate Professionals and Technical Occupations; Health and Social Services Officers; Health Associate Professionals; Personal Service Occupations; Healthcare and Related Personal Services

Suite Clinical Health Skills

Key words Otoscope, discomfort in the ear, foreign bodies, excess wax