

Preterm Labor Assessment Toolkit

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Competencies

Please note:

These competencies are samples provided by various hospitals, which were reviewed and modified for use in this manual. It is important that any competency reflects the practice within an institution, so please review the content carefully and revise as applicable to your facility.

**Department of Nursing: Labor and Delivery
Sterile Speculum Examination**

COMPETENCY CHECKLIST

Name: _____

Competency Statement: The RN competently performs sterile speculum examinations to determine the status of the membranes, obtain specimens and cultures, and/or visualize the cervical os.		Validation: To be completed by designated evaluator, MD/CNM, or previously certified RN	
Performance Criteria	Date/ Initials	Date/ Initials	Comments
Obtains or checks physician's order for the exam, and identifies specimens to be obtained.			
Gathers appropriate equipment and supplies for desired specimens.			
Explains procedure to patient and provides for privacy.			
Washes hands.			
Positions patient properly for exam, observes for signs of distress.			
Opens sterile supplies and positions light. Prepares sterile water or sterile saline to use for lubricant if desired.			
Dons sterile gloves.			
Gently inserts speculum at an oblique angle, rotates speculum into speculum position and opens to visualize cervix.			
Adjust depth of insertion and tightens thumbscrews to secure speculum in an open position.			
Observes for pooling of amniotic fluid in the fornix. If assessing patient for ROM, observes for leakage of fluid from the cervix while asking the patient to cough.			
Ferning: Places cotton-tipped applicator in the vaginal fornix. Rolls the cotton-tipped applicator on the slide, spreading the specimen thinly over the slide. Allows slides to dry, preferable for five to seven minutes.			

Nitrazine Testing: Places a cotton-tipped applicator on a strip of Nitrazine paper. Observes for color change and compares it to the Nitrazine paper color chart.			
Removes speculum. Observes lower blade of speculum for pooled vaginal fluid if little fluid was obtained from the fornix for fern or Nitrazine testing.			
Assists patient to a position of comfort.			
Labels specimens and prepares them for transport appropriately.			
Performs microscopic exam of slide and appropriately identifies ferning when present.			
Sends the slide to lab or notifies provider to read the slide for ferning.			
Discards the used supplies and returns non-disposable items for sterilization.			
Documents procedure, pertinent findings, the patient's tolerance of the procedure and the communication with the physician on the Labor Flow Sheet or the Obstetrical Outpatient Record.			
<p>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: I have been assessed for my competency on the above performance and I assume responsibility for my practice by maintaining ongoing education and communicating any skills and/or practice needs to my manager/supervisor.</p>			
<hr/> <p>Signature of Employee</p>			

Initials	Signature of Evaluators	Date

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ Out Of _____

Sterile Speculum / Rule Out Rupture of Membranes Exam

Circle the correct response

- True False 1. The fetal fibronectin test identifies infants at risk for RH incompatibility.
- True False 2. A full bladder is necessary to perform a speculum exam.
- True False 3. K-Y jelly should be used on the speculum to provide more comfort for the patient.
- True False 4. The speculum does not need to be sterile to perform a speculum exam to rule out ROM or collect fFN.
- True False 5. Blood and semen can give you a false positive Nitrazine paper result.
- True False 6. It is appropriate to swab the cervical os with the dacron/cotton swab for obtaining a fluid specimen for the fern test.
- True False 7. A “fern-like” pattern seen on the microscope slide is considered a positive sign of rupture or leaking of amniotic fluid.
- True False 8. It is not necessary to let the microscope slide air dry before you begin looking in the microscope.
- True False 9. The diagnosis of rupture or leaking of amniotic fluid is very reliable if the fluid in the vagina gives a positive Nitrazine and positive fern test.
- True False 10. A patient who is early in the third trimester c/o symptoms of PTL (this is her fourth visit with the same symptoms) is a candidate for fFN specimen collected as part of her assessment.
- True False 11. If the sterile speculum exam provides evidence of ROM, the fFN test should still be processed in order to support the diagnosis.

Name the two basic types of speculums and how to choose the appropriate sized speculum for the patient.

1.

2.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ Out Of _____

Sterile Speculum / Rule Out Rupture of Membranes Exam (Answer Sheet)

Circle the correct response

- True False 12. The fetal fibronectin test identifies infants at risk for RH incompatibility.
- True False 13. A full bladder is necessary to perform a speculum exam.
- True False 14. K-Y jelly should be used on the speculum to provide more comfort for the patient.
- True False 15. The speculum does not need to be sterile to perform a speculum exam to rule out ROM or collect fFN.
- True False 16. Blood and semen can give you a false positive Nitrazine paper result.
- True False 17. It is appropriate to swab the cervical os with the dacron/cotton swab for obtaining a fluid specimen for the fern test.
- True False 18. A “fern-like” pattern seen on the microscope slide is considered a positive sign of rupture or leaking of amniotic fluid.
- True False 19. It is not necessary to let the microscope slide air dry before you begin looking in the microscope.
- True False 20. The diagnosis of rupture or leaking of amniotic fluid is very reliable if the fluid in the vagina gives a positive Nitrazine and positive fern test.
- True False 21. A patient who is early in the third trimester c/o symptoms of PTL (this is her fourth visit with the same symptoms) is a candidate for fFN specimen collected as part of her assessment.
- True False 22. If the sterile speculum exam provides evidence of ROM, the fFN test should still be processed in order to support the diagnosis.

Name the two basic types of speculums and how to choose the appropriate sized speculum for the patient.

1. Graves – wide flat blades
2. Pedersons – straight narrow blades

Sizes/Patient Populations

- Large – heavy women, higher parity and/or lax vaginal/perineal tone
- Medium – primigravidas or thin, slight build
- Small – very young women

Point of Care
Fern Test Competency

Name: _____

Date: _____

Competency

Performance Objective: Material suspected of being amniotic fluid will be checked under the microscope to determine whether or not it is amniotic fluid.

Met	Not Met	Comments
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Clean glass slides, kept with microscope.

Met	Not Met	Comments
------------	----------------	-----------------

Using clean gloves, the collected specimen is applied to one side of clean glass slide so specimen is spread across the surface.

Met	Not Met	Comments
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Allowed to air dry for at least 5-7 minutes.

Met	Not Met	Comments
------------	----------------	-----------------

Dry slide viewed under the low power objective of the microscope.

Met	Not Met	Comments
------------	----------------	-----------------

Able to describe finding as: A “fern” like pattern which indicates the presence of amniotic fluid.

Met	Not Met	Comments
------------	----------------	-----------------

Makes preliminary assessment of pattern; test read by physician/CNM or laboratory.

Met	Not Met	Comments
------------	----------------	-----------------

Disposes of slide in a sharps container, if read by provider on the unit.

Met	Not Met	Comments
------------	----------------	-----------------

Disposes of gloves in a biohazard container.

Met	Not Met	Comments
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Able to discuss principle of test:

Proteins found in amniotic fluid form a fern-like pattern when allowed to air dry. Other fluids do not form this pattern upon drying.

Met	Not Met	Comments
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Nursing Competency

Fern Testing of Amniotic Fluid

To successfully complete this competency, the RN must:

1. Pass a knowledge exam for fern testing of amniotic fluid.
2. Perform the competency once with 100% accuracy in classroom or be observed by educator, manager, or designated preceptor.

Name: _____ Station _____ Date _____

Circle the correct response

True False 1. The sample of amniotic fluid may be obtained by speculum exam and sterile applicator or collection from pool and dripping clothing/pads.

True False 2. The specimen is applied to a clean, dry microscope slide.

True False 3. The slide must dry for 5-7 minutes.

True False 4. Blowing on the slide or waving the slide may be used to hasten drying.

True False 5. The slide should be viewed under the microscope using high power.

Procedure	Criteria for Evaluation	Met Criteria	Did Not Meet Criteria
1. Refers to Fern Testing Procedure	Knowledge of procedure, and limitations and significance of results demonstrated in competency.		
Quality Control			
2. Dons gloves			
3. Obtains equipment	Notes that slide is clean.		
4. Applies sample of fluid to slide.	Applies fluid to middle half of slide with applicator without going over an area a second time.		
5. Allows slide to dry	Does not wave or blow on slide. Allows to dry without disturbance.		
6. Makes preliminary assessment.	Places slide under microscope and views under low power.		
	A. Correctly identifies ferning on slide of amniotic fluid.		
	B. Correctly identifies absence of ferning on slide.		
7. Slide read by physician/ CNM or laboratory.	A. Sends slide to laboratory <u>or</u> notifies physician/ CNM to read slide.		
	B. Documents results/orders in medical record.		
8. Disposes of equipment, if appropriate.	Verbalizes disposal according to waste management procedures.		
9. Communicates results.	Calls results to physician/CNM if read by laboratory and records in nurses notes.		

Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Nursing Competency(Answer Sheet)

Fern Testing of Amniotic Fluid

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5. Allows slide to dry	Does not wave or blow on slide. Allows to dry without disturbance.		
6. Makes preliminary assessment.	Places slide under microscope and views under low power.		
	C. Correctly identifies ferning on slide of amniotic fluid.		
	D. Correctly identifies absence of ferning on slide.		
7. Slide read by physician/ CNM or laboratory.	C. Sends slide to laboratory <u>or</u> notifies physician/ CNM to read slide.		
	D. Documents results/orders in medical record.		
8. Disposes of equipment, if appropriate.	Verbalizes disposal according to waste management procedures.		
9. Communicates results.	Calls results to physician/CNM if read by laboratory and records in nurses notes.		

Evaluator: _____

Date: _____