



Quick Information Sheet

Pediatric Pearls

Every child is different. How they manifest illness can vary from child to child. Parental input is important when providing a family-centered approach to pediatric care. Enlisting the help of the family can decrease anxiety for the child and is an integral part in any pediatric assessment.

Physical Assessment Tips

- Talk to the child, be honest. Don't promise 'it won't hurt' and avoid scary words, such as, "I'm going to 'take' your blood pressure" instead say, "I'm going to 'check' your blood pressure"
- Appearance is the single most important factor in a pediatric assessment; children who are truly sick or injured do not have the "usual" appearance
- When examining a child start with the least invasive first
- Along with appearance, breathing and circulation are the main components of the assessment. These factors are vital in assessing the severity of illness and urgency of intervention
- Blood pressure has limited value in assessing circulation in children < 3years of age and should not be checked repeatedly
- Normal capillary refill (< 2 seconds) is frequently affected by temperature and hydration and is only one piece of the puzzle

Symptom Management Tips

- Children can experience severe symptoms from treatments as well as their disease and may be unable to verbalize the symptoms they experience
- Children who do not interact with you or their family may be suffering, with

things such as pain, fear of abandonment, loneliness, and separation

- Behavioral changes such as decreased appetite, whining/clinging, facial expression, guarding a body part (arm/leg), or change in activity or bowel habits, may be signs of pain
- Numerous medications may increase the burden on the family and child

Psychosocial Tips

- The child and family are the center of care
- All children grieve
- Dying children worry for others and may strive to protect their parents and family members
- Children may have a fear of being alone at the end of life
- Children often express their feelings through play or art. Use play to gain a child's trust or as a distraction
- Treat the child based on their behavioral age, not their developmental age

Keep in mind that parents know their child best and are vital when assessing the child's current state of health.

Other Quick Information Sheets are available at www.hpna.org.

Reference

Kang TI, Munson D, Klick JC. Pediatric palliative care. *Pediatric Clinics of North America*, 2007;54:5:583-836.

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