## General Approach to the Physical Examination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Core Clinical/Year 3+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do</strong></td>
<td><strong>Know</strong></td>
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| • Wash your hands before entering room and consider the hygiene of examination instruments | • Typical order of examination:  
  Vital Signs (may be taken from nursing records in hospital)  
  General Appearance  
  Head/Eyes/Ears/Nose/Throat (HEENT)  
  Neck/Thyroid/Lymph  
  Breast/Axilla  
  Cardiovascular  
  Chest  
  Abdomen  
  Men- Genital and Rectal (may be left until the end)  
  Women- Pelvic and Rectal (may be left until the end)  
  Musculoskeletal  
  Neurologic | • The components of a focused examination based on the history presented by the patient.  
• Alternative ways to examine patients in the hospitalized setting:  
  - Examination of the neck and thyroid anteriorly  
  - Auscultation of the lungs in the lateral decubitus position in patients unable to sit upright |
| • The examination is typically done from head to toe but some variations can be acceptable for the hospitalized patient | • For efficiency try to minimize movements for the patient and you  
  • Ensure **ideal conditions** with adequate lighting, quiet environment, proper equipment at bedside:  
    BP cuff, watch, penlight, oto-ophthalmoscope,  
    Snellen card, tongue blades, stethoscope,  
    measuring tape, reflex hammer, lubricating jelly,  
    examination gloves, safety pin, cotton, tuning forks (512 Hz and 128Hz)  
  • During Auscultation always apply the stethoscope to bare skin and DO NOT listen through clothing  
  • Ensure **patient modesty** by providing privacy, using gown and sheet to allow exposure only to areas needed to perform a proper examination.  
  • Ensure **patient comfort** by assisting with changing positions as needed, helping to replace socks or other items (eg. blankets), warming stethoscope, and asking if there is anything to make the person more comfortable  
  • Make note of patient’s general appearance: do they appear their age, are they in distress? |