



Expert in my pocket

PULSE RATE

Pulse Rate



1 Preparing for the procedure

- Perform hand hygiene.
- Introduce self and obtain verbal consent.
- Position patient so pulse point is available for assessment.



2 Performing the procedure

- Use two or three middle fingertips to locate the pulse. Radial pulse is usually used as it lies close to skin surface and is accessible at the wrist. Do not use thumb to palpate pulse – you may mistake patient's pulse for your own using this technique.
- Lightly hold fingers over the pulse.
- Using the second hand on a clock, count the beat for a full minute. If the pulse is regular, subsequent pulse rates may be taken for 30 seconds and rate counted may be multiplied by two.
- Note pulse characteristics including rhythm and strength.



3 Documentation

- Document all relevant information.

Background

Approximately 70–80% adverse events are preceded by derangements in vital signs for up to 12 hours with minimal or no intervention from clinicians. This emphasises the need for health professionals to ensure patient safety by careful patient assessment. Recognition and managing the deteriorating patient is one of the Australian National and Quality Health Service Standards developed by the Australian Commission on Quality and Safety in Health care in 2011.

Equipment required

- Hand Sanitiser
- Clock with second hand

References

- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) (September 2011), National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, ACSQHC, Sydney
<http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/NSQHS-Standards-Sept-2012.pdf>.
- Smith S, Duell D, Martin B. Clinical Nursing Skills: Basic to Advanced Skills. 8th ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education 2012.
- Tollefson J. Clinical Psychomotor Skills: Assessment Tools for Nursing Students. 5th ed. Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia; 2012.

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