Assessment of Head, Neck, Nose, Mouth, & Pharynx

By
Myung-Hee Pak, RN, MSN, CCRN
Victoria Siegel RN, MSN, EdD
Sharon Niggemeier RN, MSN

Subjective Data-Head
- Headache (HA)
- Injury
- Dizziness/Syncope
- Neck Pain
- Limited ROM
- Lumps or Swelling
- Hx. Head or Neck Surgery

Objective Data-Head
- Examination of the Head
- Cranium (Skull): Inspect and palpate
- Temporal area: Inspect & palpate
- Face: Inspect and palpate, note symmetry, test cranial nerves (CN) V and VII
- Inspect the nose and test for CN I

Objective Data—Physical Exam
Head—Inspect and palpate the skull
- Size and shape: normocephalic round and symmetric
- Temporal area: smooth movement with no limitation or tenderness

Head—Inspect the face
- Facial structures: symmetric, no tics in the facial muscles

Structure and Function

Head
- Cranial bones
- Sutures
- Facial bones
- Facial muscles
- Salivary glands
- Cervical vertebra
  - Vertebra prominens: C7

Neck
- Neck muscles
- Anterior and posterior triangles
- Thyroid gland
### Lymphatics
- Preauricular
- Posterior auricular (mastoid)
- Occipital
- Submental
- Submandibular

### Objective Data—Physical Exam (cont.)
#### Neck—Inspect and palpate
- Symmetry
- Range of motion
- Lymph nodes

### Subjective Data—Neck
- History of problems
- Neck pain
- Lumps
- Swelling
- Surgery

### Objective Data—Neck
- Inspect—symmetry, midline, erect
- Palpate—carotid pulse
- Note enlargement of lymph nodes
- Test for ROM, naturally decreases with age.
- Auscultate carotid arteries.

### Subjective Data—Trachea
- History trachea problems?
- Tracheotomy
- Tracheostomy

### Objective Data—Trachea
- Palpate trachea for:
  - Deviations
  - Tenderness
  - Masses
- Masses push trachea away from affected area, whereas atelectasis causes pull toward affected area.
Subjective Data- Thyroid

• History thyroid problems
• Thyroid levels
• Thyroid medication

Objective Data- Thyroid

• Inspect: note deviations or bulges
• As person extends neck slightly and swallows water, note upward, symmetrical movement of trachea and other cartilage

Palpating Thyroid

• Ask person to tilt head slightly to side and palpate lobes.
• Use fingers on opposite side to displace gland in lateral direction, ask person to swallow: isthmus rises

Palpating Thyroid

• Posterior approach
• Rest thumbs on back of person’s neck, place fingers on cricoid cartilage. Displace gland & palpate isthmus as person swallows, thyroid rises

Palpating Thyroid

• Anterior approach
• Rest fingers around sternomastoid muscle place thumbs on side of trachea. Displace gland & palpate isthmus as person swallows, thyroid rises

Thyroid

• Normal thyroid documented as:
• Thyroid palpated as symmetric, without enlargement. Texture consistent, with no masses, nodules or tenderness.
Sample Charting

**Subjective**
Denies any unusually frequent or severe headache, no history of head injury, dizziness, or syncope, no neck pain, limitation of motion, limitation of motion, lumps, or swelling.

Sample Charting

**Objective**
- **Head:** Normocephalic, no lesions, no tenderness.
- **Face:** Symmetric, no weakness or drooping, no involuntary movements.
- **Neck:** Supple with full ROM, no pain, Symmetric, no lymphadenopathy or masses, Trachea midline, thyroid not palpable. No bruits.

Structure and Function

Nose
- **External nose**
- **Nasal cavity**
  - **Septum**
  - **Turbinates**

Structure and Function (cont.)

Paranasal sinuses
- **Frontal**
- **Maxillary**
- **Ethmoid**
- **Sphenoid**

Subjective Data- Nose

- **Discharge**
- **Frequent upper respiratory infections**
- **Sinus pain**
- **Trauma**
- **Epistaxis**
- **Allergies**
- **Sense of smell**

Objective Data- Nose

- **Inspect external nose:** symmetry, deformity, lesions
- **Palpate sinuses,** note tenderness
- **Test patency of each nostril**
- **Inspect using nasal speculum:**
  - Color and integrity of nasal mucosa
  - Septum- note any deviation, perforation, bleeding
  - Turbinates- Note color, exudate, swelling
Objective Data—Physical Exam

(cont.)

Nose—*Inspect and palpate*
- External nose
- Nasal cavity
  - Holding the otoscope
  - Nasal septum
  - Turbinates

(cont.)

Sinus Areas—*Palpate*
- Frontal and maxillary sinuses
- Transillumination

Structure and Function

(cont.)

Mouth
- Hard and soft palates
- Uvula
- Tongue

(cont.)

Salivary glands
- Parotid
- Submandibular
- Sublingual
- Teeth

Subjective Data- Oral cavity

- Sores/lesions
- Sore throat
- Bleeding gums
- Toothache
- Dysphagia
- Altered taste
- Tobacco
- Self-care behaviors

Objective Data - Oral Cavity Exam

- Wharton’s Duct: opening of submandibular glands
- Stensen’s Duct: opening of parotid salivary glands
- Warn client and elicit gag by touching posterior wall of pharynx with tongue blade (tests CN IX & X)
Objective Data—Oral Cavity Exam

- Inspect and palpate:
  - Client opens and closes jaw- feel TMJ
  - Note condition teeth, gums, mucosa
  - Parotid glands: swelling
  - Lips: (lumps, lesion, etc)
  - Open mouth, stick out tongue, move side to side (tests CN XII)
  - Say AH …soft palate rises midline (tests CN X)

- With tongue blade inspect cheeks and underside lips
- With gloves and gauze- pull tongue L and R

Sample Charting

- Subjective
  - Nose: No history of discharge, sinus problems, obstruction, epistaxis, or allergy. Colds 1-2/yr, mild. Fractured nose during high school sports, treated by MD.
  - Mouth and throat: No pain, lesions, bleeding gums, toothache, dysphasia, or hoarseness. Occasional sore throat with colds. Tonsillectomy, age 8. Smokes cigarettes 1 pd x 9 years. Alcohol-socially, about 2 x/month. Visits dentists annually, dental hygienist 2 x/year, flosses daily. No dental appliance.

- Objective
  - Nose: Symmetric, no deformity or skin lesions. Nares patent. Mucosa pink, no discharge, lesions, or polyps, no septal deviation or perforation. Sinuses-no tenderness to palpation.
  - Mouth: Can clench teeth. Mucosa and gingiva pink, no masses or lesions, Teeth are all present, straight, and in good repair. Tongue smooth, pink, no lesions, protrudes in midline, no tremor
  - Throat: Mucosa pink, no lesions or exudate. Uvula rises in midline on phonation, Tonsils out. Gag reflex present.
Summary: Assessment of Head & Neck

- Includes:
- Head
- Nose
- Oral cavity
- Neck & lymph nodes
- Trachea
- Thyroid