OSCE checklist for back care

An OSCE checklist for back care covers privacy and consent, turning the patient safely onto their side, washing and drying the back gently, inspecting pressure areas without massaging them, and leaving the patient comfortable.

OSCE checklist for back care: steps to practise

1. Clean your hands, introduce yourself, confirm the patient's name and date of birth against the wristband, explain what you will do and gain consent.
2. Check the care plan, moving and handling plan and any allergies or skin sensitivities to cleansers or creams.
3. Close the curtains, keep the patient covered, and collect warm water, a pH-balanced skin cleanser, towels, a clean gown, clean linen, gloves and an apron.
4. Raise the bed to a safe working height and apply the brakes. Turn the patient onto their side with a colleague and a slide sheet as the moving and handling plan says, making sure they cannot roll off the far side.
5. Expose only the back and keep the rest covered.
6. Look at the skin over the spine, shoulder blades, hips, sacrum and buttocks for redness, broken skin, blisters or moisture damage. Check whether any redness blanches when lightly pressed.
7. Wash the back gently, rinse and pat dry well, especially skin folds. Do not rub or massage the skin, and never massage red areas over bony points.
8. Apply an emollient or barrier product only if it is prescribed or in the care plan.
9. Change any damp linen, smooth out wrinkles, and return the patient to a comfortable position that keeps weight off any red area.
10. Replace the gown, lower the bed, use bed rails only as the risk assessment says, and leave the call bell in reach.
11. Remove gloves and apron, clean your hands, and record the skin condition and any action taken.
12. Report any non-blanching redness, broken skin or blisters to the nurse in charge, and follow your pressure ulcer policy.

What candidates commonly forget

- Massaging or rubbing skin over red areas or bony points
- Leaving skin damp in folds
- Exposing the patient for too long
- Turning the patient without help or a slide sheet
- Not checking whether redness blanches
- Not recording or reporting what the skin looked like

Local policy comes first

This is our own practice checklist. Your college, hospital or country may do some steps differently. Where local policy and this list disagree, follow local policy.

Practise the hands-on steps with a classmate or in a skills lab, because an AI patient cannot watch your technique. You can practise the talking part with an AI patient, and try one station free with no sign-up. Next, try Pressure prevention with reduced sensation. Back to the nursing foundation OSCE page: nursing foundation OSCE, or see the full OSCE checklist list.

Common questions

What is the OSCE checklist for back care?

Confirm identity and consent, protect privacy, turn the patient safely on their side, inspect and gently wash the back, pat dry, apply only prescribed skin products, reposition, record and report pressure damage.

Should I massage red skin?

No. Do not massage or rub skin to prevent pressure ulcers, and never massage reddened areas over bony points. Relieve pressure, report it and follow your pressure ulcer policy.

Why is back care in a foundation OSCE?

It tests privacy, safe turning, skin inspection and basic hygiene, all of which help prevent pressure damage.

Sources

- NICE CG179: pressure ulcers
- NMC: standards of proficiency for registered nurses

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.