OSCE checklist for bed bath

An OSCE checklist for bed bath covers privacy, consent, comfort and safe handling, washing from the cleanest areas to the least clean, checking the skin and leaving the patient comfortable and dignified. Practise talking throughout.

OSCE checklist for bed bath: steps to practise

1. Check the care plan and the patient's wishes, and any mobility or skin concerns.
2. Wash or rub your hands, put on an apron, and gather the equipment, water, towels and clean clothing.
3. Introduce yourself, confirm identity, explain and gain consent. Offer the toilet and pain relief if needed.
4. Close the curtains or door, and make sure the room is warm enough.
5. Adjust the bed to a safe working height, lower the bedrail on your side and make the patient comfortable.
6. Check the water temperature yourself and ask the patient to check it.
7. Wash, rinse and dry one area at a time, starting with the face and working to the feet, with the groin and perineum last, as your course teaches.
8. Expose only the area you are washing, and keep the rest covered.
9. Change the water and cloth when dirty and use separate cloths for the genitals.
10. Check the skin, especially pressure areas, and look for redness, damage or moisture.
11. Apply moisturiser or other care if ordered, dress the patient and change the bed linen if needed.
12. Return the patient to a comfortable position, lower the bed, put the call bell in reach, and record skin findings.

What candidates commonly forget

- Dignity and privacy at all times.
- Checking water temperature.

- Using gloves for the perineal area.
- Inspecting the pressure areas.
- Safe bed height and call bell.

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. The order of washing, glove use and how you wash the perineum vary slightly between courses. Follow your local version. You can practise with an AI patient, and try one station free with no sign-up. See also the general OSCE nursing checklist.

Common questions

Where do I start a bed bath?

Usually the face and work down, finishing with the groin and perineum, but use the order your course teaches.

What do I check while giving a bed bath?

The skin, pressure areas, comfort, pain and anything unusual, such as redness or damage.

How do I keep the patient's dignity?

Close the curtains, cover the parts you are not washing, and explain each step.

Sources

- NHS: Pressure ulcers
- NICE CG179: Pressure ulcers
- National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (Scotland), chapter 1: standard precautions

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