OSCE checklist for chest pain history

An OSCE checklist for chest pain history explores the pain itself, the symptoms that go with it, the risk factors and the worries, then settles on a safe plan. This is our own practice list.

The checklist, step by step

1. Introduce yourself, confirm identity and ask for consent. If the patient looks unwell, say that you would call for help and get an ECG before you finish.
2. Ask an open question about the pain, and let the patient describe it.
3. Ask about the site, whether it spreads, how it started, what it feels like and how severe it is.
4. Ask about timing: how long it lasts, how often, and whether it has been getting worse.
5. Ask what brings it on or relieves it: exertion, rest, breathing, posture, eating, movement, or a spray.
6. Ask about breathlessness, sweating, nausea, palpitations, fainting, cough, fever, leg swelling and recent travel or surgery.
7. Ask about heart disease, blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol, smoking, family history, and medicines.
8. Ask about the patient's ideas and worries.
9. Summarise and give your top three likely causes in plain words.
10. Explain the next steps, such as an ECG and blood tests, and safety-net advice.
11. Thank the patient.

What candidates commonly forget

- Spotting an unwell patient and saying you would escalate.
- Asking about leg swelling and recent travel, for a clot in the lung.
- Asking about the effect of breathing and posture.
- Asking about risk factors and family history.

- Giving more than one cause.

How to use this list

This is our own practice checklist. Exam bodies mark in their own way. Use it to build a routine, then say each step aloud as you do it. You can also practise with an AI patient on this site, and try one station free with no sign-up. For original examination stations, see the PLAB 2 stations list.

Common questions

What causes should I think of for chest pain?

Think of the heart, the lungs, the great vessels, the gut and the chest wall, and of anxiety. NHS pages on angina, heart attack and pulmonary embolism list the features.

Which guideline covers this?

NICE publishes a guideline on recent-onset chest pain of suspected cardiac origin.

Is this a marking sheet?

No. It is our own list for practice.

Sources

- NICE: Recent-onset chest pain of suspected cardiac origin (CG95)
- NHS: Angina
- NHS: Heart attack
- NHS: Pulmonary embolism

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