OSCE checklist for enema administration

An OSCE checklist for enema administration covers checking the prescription and allergies, consent and privacy with a chaperone offered, positioning on the left side, inserting a lubricated nozzle gently, giving the enema slowly, watching for distress and recording the result.

OSCE checklist for enema administration: steps to practise

1. Check the prescription for the right patient, type of enema, route, time and expiry date, and check the reason it is needed.
2. Check for allergies, including latex and lubricant, and ask about recent bowel habit, rectal bleeding, pain or recent rectal or bowel surgery. Do not proceed and ask a registered nurse or doctor if you have any concern.
3. Wash your hands, introduce yourself, confirm identity (name, date of birth and wristband) and explain the procedure in plain words.
4. Gain consent, close curtains or the door, offer a chaperone and make sure a toilet, commode or bedpan is close by.
5. Prepare the enema as the product leaflet and local policy say, for example warming a ready-made pack to body temperature in warm water, never in a microwave.
6. Wash your hands again and put on an apron and gloves. Place a waterproof pad under the patient.
7. Help the patient into the left lateral position with the upper knee bent, keeping them covered except for the area needed.
8. Expel air from the nozzle, lubricate the tip and ask the patient to breathe slowly through the mouth to relax.
9. Insert the nozzle gently into the rectum, following the product guidance on depth. Never force it. Stop if there is resistance, pain or bleeding.
10. Give the enema slowly. Stop and get help if the patient has severe pain, bleeding, feels faint or becomes pale or clammy, and check their pulse.
11. Remove the nozzle slowly, clean the area and ask the patient to hold the fluid for as long as the leaflet or prescription says.

12. Help the patient to the toilet or commode with the call bell in reach, and stay close for safety.
13. Dispose of waste as clinical waste, remove gloves and apron and wash your hands.
14. Record the enema, time, result (amount and type of stool, using the Bristol stool chart if your setting uses it) and how the patient felt. Report any bleeding, no result or distress to the nurse in charge.

What candidates commonly forget

- Not checking allergies, including latex
- Not offering a chaperone or protecting dignity
- Forcing the nozzle against resistance
- Giving the fluid too fast
- Not watching for faintness or bleeding and not reporting it
- Not recording the result

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 Abdominal discomfort during home follow-up. Back to the medical surgical nursing OSCE page: medical surgical nursing OSCE, or see the full OSCE checklist list.

Common questions

What is the OSCE checklist for an enema?

Check the prescription and allergies, explain and gain consent, offer a chaperone, position the patient on the left side, insert the lubricated nozzle gently, give slowly,

help them hold it, help them to the toilet, then record and report.

Why the left side?

The shape of the lower bowel lets the fluid flow in more easily in this position.

When should I stop?

Stop if you feel resistance or if the patient has severe pain, bleeding, or feels faint. Stay with them, check their pulse and get help from a registered nurse or doctor.

When is an enema not safe?

It may not be safe in suspected bowel obstruction, after some bowel or rectal surgery, or in some bowel conditions. Check the prescription and ask a registered nurse or doctor if you are unsure.

Sources

- NMC: standards of proficiency for registered nurses
- NICE CG139: infection prevention and control

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