OSCE checklist for oral medication administration

An OSCE checklist for oral medication administration covers the rights of medication, checking the chart and allergies, preparing the medicine without touching it, confirming identity, giving it with water, seeing it swallowed and recording it.

OSCE checklist for oral medication administration: steps to practise

1. Wash your hands and check the prescription for the right patient, medicine, dose, route, time and frequency, and the allergy status.
2. Check the dose has not already been given and that the prescription is signed, dated and clear. Ask the prescriber if anything is unclear.
3. Check any observations needed before certain medicines, as the prescription or policy says.
4. Collect the medicine and check the label and expiry date against the chart when you pick it up, when you prepare it and before you give it.
5. Prepare the dose without touching the tablets, using a clean pot. For liquids, use an oral syringe or measure. Follow your policy for controlled drugs, which need a second checker.
6. Go to the patient, introduce yourself and confirm identity against the wristband and by asking their name and date of birth. Ask about allergies again.
7. Explain what the medicine is for and any common side effects, and gain consent.
8. Check the patient can swallow safely. Do not crush tablets or open capsules unless a pharmacist or prescriber has advised it.
9. Sit the patient upright and give the medicine with a drink of water, unless they have been told to have only thickened fluids or nothing by mouth.
10. Stay and watch the patient swallow the medicine. Never leave medicines at the bedside unless your policy allows self-administration.
11. Sign the chart straight away, and record refusal or any missed dose with the reason. Report refusals, missed doses or any reaction to the nurse in charge or prescriber.

What candidates commonly forget

- Leaving medicine at the bedside
- Not confirming identity by two methods
- Not checking allergies
- Not checking the patient can swallow
- Signing before the patient took it
- Not recording or reporting refusals

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 An oral medicine at the community clinic. 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 oral medication?

Check the prescription and allergies, check the medicine three times, confirm identity, explain and gain consent, check swallowing, give with water, watch it swallowed, sign and report any problem.

What if the patient refuses?

Do not force or hide medicine in food. Explore the reason, record the refusal and report it to the nurse in charge or prescriber.

Do I need to know doses?

Check doses against the prescription and the British National Formulary (BNF) or your local formulary. Do not rely on memory, and ask if unsure.

Sources

- NICE NG5: medicines optimisation
- WHO: Medication Without Harm

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