OSCE checklist for urine dipstick testing

An OSCE checklist for urine dipstick testing covers explaining the test, collecting a clean midstream sample, keeping a sterile portion for culture, dipping and reading the strip at the right times, interpreting the result with the history, escalating abnormal results and deciding the next step.

OSCE checklist for urine dipstick testing: steps to practise

1. Clean your hands, introduce yourself and confirm the patient's identity: full name and date of birth, checked against the wristband for inpatients.
2. Explain the test and why it is needed, gain consent, and explain how to give a clean midstream sample.
3. Collect a sterile container, gloves, an apron if policy says, dipsticks in date, a timer and a culture bottle or container if needed.
4. Clean your hands and put on gloves before handling the sample. Note its colour, clarity and any smell.
5. If the sample may go for culture, pour that portion into a sterile container first, so the strip does not contaminate it.
6. Check the dipstick pot is in date and the strips are not discoloured. Close the pot straight away.
7. Dip the strip briefly so all pads are covered, then remove excess urine against the edge of the container.
8. Hold the strip level and read each pad against the colour chart at the time stated on the pot: leucocytes, nitrites, protein, blood, glucose, ketones, pH and specific gravity.
9. Interpret the results with the history. Dipsticks are not reliable for diagnosing urinary infection in adults over 65 or in patients with a catheter, so follow national guidance.
10. Escalate abnormal results. Glucose with ketones needs a capillary glucose and ketone check and prompt senior review. Consider a pregnancy test in a woman who could be pregnant with abdominal pain.
11. Decide the next step, such as sending the sample for culture, treating as guidance says, or repeating the test.

12. Dispose of the strip and urine safely, remove gloves, clean your hands, explain the result to the patient and document.

What candidates commonly forget

- Not wearing gloves when handling the sample
- Dipping the strip into the sample meant for culture
- Reading at the wrong time
- Not checking the expiry date
- Relying on a dipstick for infection in older adults or patients with a catheter
- Not escalating glucose and ketones
- Not explaining the result to the patient

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 Lower abdominal pain in a young woman. Back to the medicine OSCE for MBBS students page: medicine OSCE for MBBS students, or see the full OSCE checklist list.

Common questions

What is the OSCE checklist for urine dipstick testing?

Confirm identity, explain and gain consent, collect a midstream sample, keep a sterile portion for culture, check the strip is in date, dip and read at the stated times, interpret with the history, escalate abnormal results, plan the next step and document.

What do nitrites and leucocytes suggest?

A possible urinary tract infection, but always link the result to symptoms. Follow national guidance on diagnosing infection.

When do I send a sample for culture?

As your local guideline says, for example in pregnancy, in men, in older adults, with a catheter, or when symptoms recur or do not settle.

Sources

- GOV.UK: urinary tract infection diagnostic tools for primary care
- NICE NG109: urinary tract infection (lower): antimicrobial prescribing
- NICE CG139: infection prevention and control

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