



SONOMA • VALLEY  
**COMMUNITY  
HEALTH CENTER**

# **SENSITIVE EXAM OR PROCEDURE**

---

**Sensitive exam or procedure** involves the breast (in female patients), rectum and / or genitals in any patient. They should always be done in a serious and private way. If you feel uneasy at any time, speak up

---

- During sensitive exams or procedures, you should expect:
- An explanation of the exam, including why it is needed, what the provider will do and what it may feel like.
- Privacy to undress. You should NOT be asked to undress in front of a provider or other staff.
- You should be offered a covering (gown or drape) if your body is exposed.
- The provider should NEVER make sexual remarks, hints or jokes.
- You have the right to refuse any portion of an exam or stop it at any time. You are in charge of your body.

# Privacy

We value your privacy and respect your right to dignity during all exams.

---

- During your visit, you should expect:
- The door will be closed during your exam. Only the people involved in your exam should be present during your care.
- The provider and/or staff will wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after delivering care. Gloves will be worn whenever there is a chance to come into contact with open wounds, blood and/or bodily fluids. Gloves are not required for touching skin only.
- The provider and/or staff will explain the exam or procedure to you. They may ask questions about your medical history that are related to the exam or procedure.
- The provider and/or staff will ask permission prior to touching you. They will explain what to expect during your visit.
- A medical chaperone will be provided for all sensitive exams and procedures as well for other procedures if requested. Please speak up if you feel uncomfortable or notice any odd behavior during your exam or procedure.

# Chaperones

Some medical exams and procedures are more sensitive than others. We use trained chaperones to help ensure patient and provider comfort, safety, privacy, security and dignity during these exams and procedures. The chaperone will stand in a location where they can observe what is going on and assist as needed.

---

- Patients may request a chaperone of the same gender.
- Patients who are 12 years and older and who can make their own medical decisions can decline a chaperone. The provider may also decide not to perform an exam or procedure unless a chaperone is present.

# Breast Exam

A clinical breast exam is done to evaluate the breasts for changes or problems. As part of the exam, the provider will first look at your breasts and then feel your breasts, your underarm area and the area below your breast bone. At times, a provider may need to squeeze your nipple to check for discharge.

---

- Expect an explanation before all breast exams.
- Unless a medical condition or concern exists, it is not appropriate for a provider to comment on the aesthetic appearance of breasts.
- Patients only need to undress from the waist up for a breast exam.
- Providers do NOT need to wear gloves for a breast exam.
- A provider may need to move your hair behind your shoulders or move a necklace to the back to better see your breasts. These gestures should be explained to you.
- You have the right to refuse any portion of an exam or stop it at any time. You are in charge of your body.

**Exam of the Vulva and Vagina (Pelvic Exam)** An exam of the vulva and vagina is often called a pelvic exam. It may involve both an external and internal inspection as well as touching. Pelvic exams are used to screen for cancer, collect samples if an infection is suspected or to help diagnose if there is bleeding, pain or other symptoms.

---

- Expect an explanation before all pelvic exams.
- Unless there is a medical condition or concern, it is not appropriate for the provider to comment on the aesthetic appearance of a patient's vulva or vagina.
- The provider will wear gloves.
- The provider should NOT repeatedly move their fingers in and out of the patient's vagina.
- A duck bill-shaped plastic or metal instrument, called a speculum, is often used for the internal vagina exam. The provider should inform you before inserting it. It should be gently inserted and opened to provide visual access in the vagina.
- Vagina exams (with a speculum) are typically not required until age 21, unless the patient has specific symptoms, conditions or has medical risks. The patient's doctor should discuss risks with them prior to the exam.
- During pregnancy, pelvic exams are routinely performed during the first visit, during the last trimester and if there are any changes in the patient's health or that of the baby.
- You may refuse any part of the exam or ask for it to be stopped at any time. You are in charge.

In some instances, a bimanual or digital vaginal exam may be clinically indicated to be performed prior to the speculum exam.

# Rectal Exam

A rectal exam may be necessary to make a diagnosis for patients who have symptoms, including but not limited to, pain in the abdomen, blood in their stool, changes in bowel habits or for urinary symptoms. It may also be necessary to collect a sample to run a test for suspected sexually transmitted diseases of the rectum.

---

A rectal exam may be done with a patient lying on their back, lying on their side, lying face down or kneeling on or over an exam table.

**External Exam:** The provider will examine the anus and the area around the anus. They look for sores, rashes or other lesions. The chaperone or a medical assistant may be asked to move a light so the provider can see the area better. If testing for infections, a swab may be placed about 1 inch into the anus / rectum, rotated gently and then removed.

**Digital Exam:** The provider inserts one gloved and lubricated finger into the anus to feel for any lumps or anything abnormal. They may also push firmly on the prostate gland, if present, to check for pain, tenderness or nodules on it.

**Anoscope Exam:** To examine the rectum inside, the provider may insert a lubricated rigid, hollow instrument, called an anoscope, into the anus. The chaperone or medical assistant may be asked to move a light so the provider can see the area better.

You may refuse any part of the exam or ask that it be stopped at any time.

## Exam of the Penis, Scrotum and Testicles

The penis, testicles and/or scrotum may be examined if a patient is having pain, swelling or discharge, has sores or other symptoms or as part of a normal skin and physical exam. It may also be done to check for a hernia.

- Expect an explanation before all exams.
  - Unless there is a medical condition or concern, it is not appropriate for a provider to comment on the aesthetic appearance of a patient's penis, scrotum or testicles.
  - The provider will wear gloves when feeling the penis and testicles.
- 

You may refuse any part of the exam or ask for it to be stopped at any time. You are in charge.

**Penis Exam:** During this part of the exam, the provider will look and touch the penis. This includes the skin, moving the foreskin, touching the tip and urethra (the urine opening in the penis).

- If the patient is not circumcised, the provider may ask them to pull back the foreskin or the provider may do this to look for sores and problems.
- The provider may feel and press all surfaces of the penis, to check for sores or problems. The provider may examine the opening of the urethra, called the urethral meatus. They may use a swab to gently collect a sample of any discharge.
- The provider may press along the shaft of the penis to see if they can press out any fluid.
- **Scrotum and Testicle Exam:** During this part of the exam, the provider will do a visual and hand exam of the testicles and scrotum.
- The provider may feel the testicles for size, irregularities and tenderness. They may also feel along the spermatic cord, which contains the spermatic artery and vein, looking for any problems.



## **Exam of the Pubic / Groin Area (hernia exam)**

A hernia is a weak spot where bowel might squeeze out. They are common in the groin area.

---

- The provider will do a complete visual exam of the scrotum, groin and hip crease to look for any problems.
- The provider will feel the groin, inner upper thigh crease, lower abdomen and hip area. They will feel the testicles, where there are lymph nodes and the spermatic cord inside the scrotum.
- During the hernia exam, while the patient is standing or lying down, the provider will place his or her fingers up against the abdominal wall and scrotum. The provider may ask the patient to cough or bear down to increase abdominal pressure to see if they can feel the weak spot or opening.
- Gloves may or may not be worn when the provider feels the patient's abdominal wall.

You may refuse any part of the exam or ask that it be stopped at any time. You are in charge.

# LET US KNOW ABOUT ANY CONCERNS

---

During the sensitive exam or procedure, if you feel that the provider or staff said or behaved in a way that made you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or did not honor your safety, privacy, security or dignity, please ask the front office staff for a Concern Form. Please place the completed form in one of the wooden boxes located in the waiting room. You can also give it to front office staff. If you prefer, you may also speak with the manager or other, available supervisor.

