

Assess the person



ABC DE is a commonly used tool in English to help people remember how to assess a person. There are many variations of this tool globally. Choose one that is widely recognised and that is going to be very easy to remember and apply.

If there is any concern about cross-infection, do this assessment by observing the person's chest or abdomen for signs of breathing.

Airway: Is the person's airway open?

- Talk to them and see if they can respond.
- Open their airway if they are unresponsive.
- Consider if they could be choking.

Breathing: Is the person breathing normally?

- Look at their chest or abdomen for movement.
- Listen for sounds of breathing.
- Feel for breaths on your cheek.

Circulation: Is the person's circulation system working properly?

- Look for signs of severe external bleeding.
- Consider if the person lost a lot of fluids (hyperthermia, burns etc).
- Consider whether the person is having a severe allergic reaction or heart attack.

The ABC check above covers the most life-threatening conditions. These should be identified and dealt with before moving onto the following (DE).

Disability: Is the person displaying any changes in their mental status or nervous system?

- Talk to the person and consider their mental status (confusion, aggression, disoriented).
- Observe them for any changes in the sensations in their extremities (arms, legs).

Examine: Do you need to examine an area of the person's body more closely?

- Explain to the person what you need to do and gain permission to examine them.
- Remove or cut clothing to expose part of the body if necessary.
- Look carefully at the signs of illness or injury.

Remember to talk to the person as they may be able to indicate what is wrong. Always act with empathy and respect. Tell them what you are doing before you do it.