

# Nursing Assessment Techniques for Geriatric Patients

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## Introduction

Geriatric patients represent a unique and growing population in healthcare, characterized by complex physiological, psychological and social needs. Aging is associated with multiple chronic conditions, functional decline, cognitive impairment and increased vulnerability to acute illnesses. Effective nursing assessment is the cornerstone of quality geriatric care, enabling early identification of health issues, planning of individualized care, prevention of complications and optimization of functional independence. Nurses play a pivotal role in evaluating the multidimensional needs of older adults, encompassing physical health, cognitive function, emotional well-being, nutrition, mobility, social support and medication management. By employing structured, evidence-based assessment techniques, nurses can ensure comprehensive care, enhance quality of life and support healthy aging [1].

## Description

Comprehensive nursing assessment of geriatric patients begins with a detailed health history. Nurses gather information about past medical conditions, surgeries, hospitalizations, medications, allergies and family health history. Understanding a patient's medical background allows for the identification of risk factors, polypharmacy issues and potential interactions between medications and chronic illnesses. Additionally, nurses explore lifestyle factors such as nutrition, exercise, alcohol or tobacco use and sleep patterns, as well as psychosocial aspects including family support, living conditions, financial resources and social engagement. A thorough health history forms the foundation for individualized care planning and preventive interventions [2]. Nurses assist patients with exercises to restore Physical assessment is a critical component of geriatric nursing evaluation. Nurses conduct systematic examinations of all major body systems, including cardiovascular, respiratory, musculoskeletal, neurological,

gastrointestinal and integumentary systems.

Age-related physiological changes, such as reduced cardiac output, decreased lung capacity, impaired renal function and skin fragility, are carefully considered to differentiate between normal aging processes and pathological conditions. Vital signs, including blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, temperature and oxygen saturation, are closely monitored. Special attention is given to subtle changes, as older adults may present atypically in response to illness, such as absence of fever in infections or atypical pain patterns. Regular, detailed physical assessment enables early detection of complications and facilitates timely interventions.

Functional assessment is essential in evaluating the ability of geriatric patients to perform activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). Nurses utilize standardized tools such as the Katz Index of Independence in ADLs and the Lawton IADL scale to measure capabilities in areas such as bathing, dressing, toileting, feeding, medication management and mobility. Identifying functional limitations helps guide rehabilitation, mobility support and care planning, ensuring that patients maintain independence and quality of life. Early detection of declines in function allows for prompt interventions, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, or assistive device provision [1].

Nutritional assessment is vital in the geriatric population due to age-related changes in appetite, digestion and nutrient absorption. Nurses evaluate dietary intake, weight trends, body mass index, hydration status and laboratory values such as serum albumin and electrolyte levels. Tools such as the Mini Nutritional Assessment (MNA) provide structured guidance in identifying malnutrition or risk thereof. Nutritional assessment allows nurses to collaborate with dietitians, implement dietary interventions and monitor the effectiveness of nutritional plans, promoting optimal health and recovery from illness.

Medication management is a key area of nursing assessment in older adults. Polypharmacy is common and increases the risk of adverse drug reactions, interactions and medication non-adherence. Nurses review all prescribed, over-the-counter and herbal medications, checking for dosage appropriateness, potential side effects and interactions. Assessment also includes evaluating patient understanding of medication regimens and ability to adhere to prescribed treatments. Effective medication assessment ensures safety, reduces complications and supports the overall management of chronic conditions [2].

## Conclusion

Nursing assessment of geriatric patients is a multidimensional and dynamic process that forms the foundation for comprehensive, individualized care. By systematically evaluating physical health, cognitive function, emotional well-being, functional status, nutrition, medication management, mobility and social support, nurses identify risk factors, prevent complications and optimize recovery and independence.

Evidence-based assessment tools, vigilant monitoring, patient and family education and interdisciplinary collaboration are essential components of effective geriatric nursing practice. Through thorough, holistic assessment, nurses ensure that older adults receive safe, effective and patient-centered care, ultimately enhancing quality of life, promoting healthy aging and supporting functional independence in this vulnerable population.

## Acknowledgement

None.

## Conflict of Interest

None.

## References

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