



Arizona State Board of Nursing

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ASBN 11

An advisory opinion adopted by AZBN is an interpretation of what the law requires. While an advisory opinion is not law, it is more than a recommendation. In other words, an advisory opinion is an official opinion of AZBN regarding the practice of nursing as it relates to the functions of nursing. Facility policies may restrict practice further in their setting and/or require additional expectations related to competency, validation, training, and supervision to assure the safety of their patient population and or decrease risk.

OPINION: VAGINAL SPECULUM EXAM AND SPECIMEN COLLECTION

APPROVED: X

DATE: 11/87

REVISED DATE: 5/95, 11/02, 9/06, 7/16

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE:

SCOPE OF PRACTICE COMMITTEE

ADVISORY OPINION VAGINAL SPECULUM EXAM AND SPECIMEN COLLECTION

It is within the scope of practice for a Registered Nurse to perform vaginal speculum exams for the purpose of evaluating the vaginal canal and cervix and collecting specimens, excluding PAP smears, if the following requirements are met:

- I. General Requirements
 - A. Written policy and procedures are maintained by the employer.
 - B. Only RNs who have satisfactorily completed an instructional program and have had supervised clinical practice are permitted to perform the procedure.
 - C. Documentation of satisfactory completion of the course of instruction and supervised practice is on file with the employer.
- II. Course of Instruction is to include but is not limited to:
 - A. Anatomy and physiology of the female reproductive system.
 - B. Indications and contraindications for performing speculum exams.
 - C. Proper methods of specimen collection to include sterile speculum exam when applicable.
 - D. Intervention for potential side effects.
 - E. Nursing care responsibilities.
- III. Special Course of Instruction Considerations Based on Patient Age

The U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women states that premenarchal children should not have a speculum examination unless associated trauma requires surgical involvement. In young post-menarchal adolescents, caution should be taken when a speculum examination is performed in order to prevent further trauma.

The below table serves as a guideline to assist the nurse in determining when speculum use is appropriate in children.

Patient Consideration	Decision Regarding Speculum Use
Premenarcheal child, lack of estrogen	No
Uncooperative or unable to tolerate speculum when necessary	No
Menarcheal girl consenting to the examination	Yes
Collection of cultures for sexually transmitted diseases	No
Any age child who refuses the speculum examination	No
General anesthesia or conscious sedation when necessary	Yes

Adapted from: Spencer, M. J. (2005). Iatrogenic hymenal injury. *Topics in Emergency Medicine*, 27(1), 87-89.

Rationale:

Examination of the vaginal canal and supporting structures requires specialized training and knowledge of techniques based on age and examination purpose. This document provides guidance on appropriate nurse training and considerations when examining patients throughout the lifespan.

Reference:

Campbell, R., Patterson, D. & Lichty, L.F. (2005). *The effectiveness of sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) programs: a review of psychological, medical, legal, and community outcomes. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 6(4), 313-329.

Mosby's Nursing Skills. (2015). *Sexual assault examination. Retrieved from http://mns.elsevierperformancemanager.com/NursingSkills/ContentPlayer/SkillContentPlayerIFrame.aspx?KeyId=311&Id=EN_190&IsConnect=False&bcp=SearchOp~0~speculum exam~False&Section=7*

Simpson, K. R. & Creehan, P. A. (Eds.). (2014). *Perinatal nursing (4th ed.)*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins: New York.

Spencer, M. J. (2005). Iatrogenic hymenal injury. *Topics in Emergency Medicine*, 27(1), 87-89.

U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. (2016). *A national protocol for sexual abuse medical forensic examinations pediatric*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ovw/249871.pdf>