

MEDICAL STUDENT POLICY

Title: Performing Sensitive Physical Exams Policy	
Relevant LCME Element(s): 3.5: Learning Environment/Professionalism	Last approved: 5/7/2025

I. PURPOSE

Outlines guidelines for medical students performing sensitive exams on patients.

II. PERSONS AFFECTED:

Medical students

III. POLICY AND PROCEDURE STATEMENT

Medical students must always have an approved medical team member present in the exam room when performing sensitive parts of the physical exam. The sensitive exam includes examination (inspection or palpation) of the genitourinary tract, rectum, vulva and breast. Approved team members may be a resident physician or another health care provider. Students may examine Gynecological Teaching Associates (patient instructors) in the Outpatient Simulation Center without any additional team members present. If an approved team member is not available, students should not perform the sensitive physical exam and should notify the supervising provider, clerkship site director or Clerkship Director to make alternate arrangements.

In acknowledgement of the fact that a patient's personal and cultural preferences may broaden their own definition of a sensitive examination, an approved team member for supervision will always be provided for other examinations if requested by a patient, parent or legal guardian.

Prior to performing a sensitive exam, the scope of the examination and the reasons for examination should be explained to the patient. If appropriate, written information clearly stating why and how the procedure is to be performed should be available for patient education.

If a patient with decision-making capacity declines a part of, or the whole examination, then it should not be done. The refusal should be noted in the chart.

In order to perform a sensitive exam, the following parameters of the examination should be adhered to:

- Consented to by the patient, or their parent or legal guardian
- Indicated to evaluate the clinical condition, patient symptom(s) or as a necessary component of the procedure
- Performed by a learner who is recognized by the patient as a part of their care team
- Done under supervision of an educator (e.g., resident physician, fellow, APP, or attending physician, etc.)

If the student is providing care in a department or clinical environment that has a separate policy with stricter guidelines regarding sensitive examinations/procedures than outlined in this policy, then that department or clinical environment's policy should be followed.

Regarding sensitive examinations for children and adolescents at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, students may not serve as chaperones. Students must speak with their attending physician about the Lurie policy, which provides guidelines for the appropriate approach to the examination and use of chaperones in this population.

IV. APPROVING BODY:
Curriculum Committee

V. REVISION HISTORY:
5/7/2025: Clarified that students may not serve as chaperones at Lurie Children's Hospital.