Nurses with Remote Nursing Certified Practice designation (RN(C)s) are able to manage the following ear, nose and throat conditions:

- Acute otitis media
- Ceruminosis
- Dental abscess
- Pharyngitis

The following assessment must be completed and documented.

**ASSESSMENT**

**History of Present Illness and Review of System**

**General**

The following characteristics of each symptom should be elicited and explored:

- Onset (sudden or gradual)
- Chronology
- Current situation (improving or deteriorating)
- Location
- Radiation
- Quality
- Timing (frequency, duration)
- Severity
- Precipitating and aggravating factors
- Relieving factors
- Associated symptoms
- Effects on daily activities
- Previous diagnosis of similar episodes
- Previous treatments
- Efficacy of previous treatments

**Cardinal Signs and Symptoms**

In addition to the general characteristics outlined above, additional characteristics of specific symptoms should be elicited, as follows:
Ears
- Recent changes in hearing
- Compliance with and effectiveness of hearing aid
- Itching
- Earache
- Discharge
- Tinnitus
- Vertigo
- Ear trauma
- Cotton Swab use

Nose and Sinuses
- Rhinorrhea
- Epistaxis
- Obstruction of airflow
- Sinus pain and localized headache
- Itching
- Anosmia
- Nasal trauma
- Sneezing
- Watery eyes

Mouth and Throat
- Hoarseness or recent voice change
- Dental status
- Oral lesions
- Bleeding gums
- Changes of the tongue, e.g. redness, bleeding, lesions
- Sore throat
- Uvula malalignment
- Dysphagia
- White patches on the inner cheeks, tongue, roof of the mouth, and throat
- Redness or soreness
- Cottony feeling in the mouth
- Loss of taste
- Pain while eating or swallowing
- Cracking and redness at the corners of the mouth

Neck
- Pain
- Swelling
- Enlarged lymph glands
- Increasing headache associated with flexing of the neck
Other Associated Symptoms
- Fever
- Malaise
- Nausea or vomiting

Medical History (General)
- Medical conditions and surgeries
- Allergies
- Medication currently used (prescription, oral contraceptives, over the counter)
- Herbal preparations, vitamins, minerals, supplements, and traditional therapies

Medical History (Specific to ENT)
- Frequent ear or throat infections
- Sinusitis
- Trauma to the head or ENT area
- ENT surgery
- Hearing loss or audiometric screening results indicating hearing loss
- Allergies including as seasonal allergies
- Asthma
- Chronic cough
- Meniere’s disease
- ENT cancer

Personal and Social History (Specific to ENT)
- Family and close contacts with similar symptoms
- Smoking including tobacco, cannabis
- Use of chewing tobacco
- Exposure to vapours during “vaping”
- Alcohol use
- Illicit drug use
- Exposure to mould
- Frequent immersion of ears in water (e.g. swimming, bathing)
- Use of foreign object to clean ear
- Use of ear protection
- Crowded living conditions
- Sexual activity
- Personal and dental hygiene habits
- Exposure to cigarette smoke, wood smoke or other respiratory irritants
- Recent air travel or scuba diving
- Occupational exposure to toxins or loud noises

PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE EARS, NOSE AND THROAT

Vitals
- Temperature
- Pulse
• Respiration
• SpO₂
• Blood pressure (BP)

**General Appearance**
• Apparent state of health
• Appearance of comfort or distress
• Colour
• Nutritional status
• Hydration status
• Hygiene
• Chronological age versus apparent age
• Difficulty with gait or balance
• Piercings and tattoos

**Ears**

**Inspection**
• Pinna: look for lesions, abnormal appearance or position. Look at the skin covering the mastoid process, behind pinna for redness or swelling, gently pull the pinna forward.
• Canal: discharge, swelling, redness, wax, foreign bodies
• Tympanic membrane: colour, light reflex, landmarks, bulging or retraction, perforation, scarring, air bubbles, fluid level
• Estimate hearing with watch or whisper test
• If whisper test fails, perform Weber and Rinne tests with a 512-hertz tuning fork

**Palpation**
• Tenderness over tragus or on manipulation of the pinna
• Tenderness on tapping of mastoid process
• Size and tenderness of pre, post auricular and occipital nodes

**Nose and Sinuses**

**Inspection**
• External: inflammation, deformity, discharge or bleeding
• Internal: colour of mucosa, edema, deviated or perforated septum, polyps, bleeding
• Observe nasal versus mouth breathing

**Palpation**
• Sinus and nasal tenderness

**Percussion**
• Sinus and nasal tenderness
Mouth and Throat

**Inspection**
- Lips: color, lesions, symmetry
- Oral cavity: breath odour, color, lesions of buccal mucosa
- Teeth and gums: redness, swelling, caries, bleeding
- Tongue: colour, texture, lesions, tenderness of floor of mouth
- Throat and pharynx: colour, exudates, uvula, tonsillar symmetry and enlargement, masses

**Neck**

**Inspection**
- Symmetry
- Swelling
- Masses
- Active range of motion
- Thyroid enlargement

**Palpation**
- Tenderness, enlargement, mobility, contour and consistency of nodes and masses
  - Nodes – Pre- and post-auricular, occipital, tonsillar, submandibular, submental, anterior and posterior cervical, supraclavicular
- Thyroid: size, consistency, contour, position, tenderness
- Parotid: tenderness (diffuse versus discrete), enlargement, mobility, contour and consistency of nodes and masses

**Associated Systems for assessment**
- A complete assessment should include the respiratory system.
- Face: inspect for asymmetry, skin changes, masses or irregularities
SYMPTOMS REQUIRING URGENT REFERRAL

The first step is to determine if the ENT presentation requires an urgent referral to a physician or nurse practitioner, or can be managed safely by an RN(C).

The following signs and symptoms require referral to a physician or nurse practitioner:
- Positive Brudzinski sign (chin to chest)
- Pain and fever with mastoid tenderness
- Difficulty with secretions, drooling
- Fever of unknown origin
- Treatment failure after 3 days for otitis media, strep throat or peritonsillar abscess
- Displaced uvula
- Uncontrollable epistaxis
- Facial fractures
- Sudden onset of deafness
- Recent ENT surgery
- Hoarseness without fever or illness
- Unexplained vertigo
- Pain out of proportion to clinical findings (consider epiglottitis)

DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

The RN(C) may consider the following diagnostic tests to support clinical decision-making:
- Swab of ear, nose or throat for Culture and Sensitivity (C&S)
REFERENCES

More recent editions of any of the items in the Reference List may have been published since this DST was published. If you have a newer version, please use it.


