



Arizona State Board of Nursing

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An advisory opinion adopted by the 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/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, 9/19 1/24
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 collecting specimens including cytology and/or cultures 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.

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.

III. Special Consideration

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.

Reference:

Langness, M., Zweig, J., Tiry, E. (2022) et al. Examining the Implementation of the National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations. *Forensic Nursing*. Apr-Jun;18(2):67-77

Simpson, K. R. & Creehan, P. A. (Eds.). (2020). Perinatal nursing (5th ed.). Lippincott Williams & Wilkins: New York.

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/846856.pdf>

Other state boards with advisory opinions/position statements that support this advisory opinion:

Maine State Board of nursing:

<https://www.maine.gov/boardofnursing/practice/rpn-questions.html#vagexam>

Pennsylvania Board of nursing:

Professional Standards of practice § 21.411:

<https://www.pacode.com/secure/data/049/chapter21/subchapDtoc.html>