



## Female Pelvic Exam Guideline

These questions and methods are designed to gather information and alleviate the patient's anxiety by establishing rapport.

### Patient questions:

1. Have you ever had a pelvic exam before? How was that experience for you?
2. [*Address presenting complaint*] What would you like to accomplish during this visit?
3. Since your last pelvic exam, have there been any changes you would like to discuss with me?
4. When was the first day of your last period? Are your periods regular?
5. I ask this question of all of my patients: do you have any concerns about your sexual health?
  - a. Are you planning a pregnancy in the next year? If not: How are you preventing pregnancy?
  - b. I offer all of my patients screening for Sexually Transmitted Infections. Would you like an STI test today?
  - c. Do you have any questions or concerns about your sexual function or pleasure? Have you noticed that your [*medication/illness/injury/surgery*] is affecting your sexual function?
6. Do you have any questions for me? If any questions or concerns come up during the exam, please bring them to my attention
7. Most of my patients are nervous about getting a pelvic exam. Is there any reason that you are particularly nervous about being here today?

### Practice Suggestions:

- Ask the patient to place the balls or heels of her feet upon the foot-rests. This placement helps to relax the inner thigh muscles.
- Ask the patient to place their buttocks/hips/seat at the edge of the table.
- Offer the patient a drape shows concern for the patient's modesty while allowing you to perform a thorough exam. Place the drape over the patient's legs, depress it at the midline, and keep the knees covered.

External Exam: I will begin with an external exam to make sure everything is healthy and normal on the outside.

Internal Exam: Next I am going to insert one finger to examine some internal structures.

Speculum Exam: This is a speculum. It is the instrument I use to see your cervix.

For patients who have had negative past speculum exam experiences, tell them how you will try and make it more comfortable this time:

- I will not surprise you. I'll let you know what is going to happen and ask you to
- breathe before any significant movement.
- I'll use lubricant. Though this can be cold at first, it helps to make the exam more
- comfortable.
- If you want me to stop at any time, hold up a hand or say "stop!" or "pause!" I will
- pause and check in with you.

Bimanual Exam: The next part of the exam is the bimanual exam (two hands). I will be inserting two fingers and then press down with my other hand on your abdomen to feel your cervix, uterus, and ovaries.

Rectovaginal Exam: You are almost done! The last part of the exam is the rectovaginal exam. I will be inserting one finger in your rectum and one finger in your vagina. This is the only way I can feel behind your uterus.