

Pediatric Assessment Triangle



The PAT functions as a rapid, initial and global assessment using only visual and auditory observations to determine severity of illness and effectively triage the pediatric patient. This should be immediately followed by/not delay the ABCDEs. It can be utilized for serial assessment of patients to track response to therapy.

Appearance: The “Tickles” (TICLS) Mnemonic		
Characteristic	Features	
Tone	Normal:	Moves spontaneously, good movement in all extremities with good tone, resists examination, strong resistance by infants to straighten limbs, sits or stands (age appropriate)
	Abnormal:	Limp, rigid, absent muscle tone
Interactiveness	Normal:	Appears alert/engaged with clinician or caregiver, interacts well with people/environment, reaches for objects
	Abnormal:	Unable to stimulate the infant/or child to engage with clinician or environment. Indicators of altered mental status or obstructed airway.
Consolability	Normal:	Able to console/comfort by normal caregivers (i.e. parents). Normal response to environmental stimuli, has differential response to caregiver vs. examiner.
	Abnormal:	Normal caregivers unable to console/comfort
Look/Gaze	Normal:	Able to make eye contact with provider, tracks visually
	Abnormal:	Unable to make eye contact, vacant stare, infant/child may not recognize normal caregivers
Speech	Normal:	Use age-appropriate speech, strong cry in infants
	Abnormal:	Unable to express self in age appropriate manner, Absent or abnormal speech, absent or no cry in infants, unable to stimulate the infant/child to cry.

Work of Breathing	
Characteristic	Abnormal Features
Abnormal airway sounds	Snoring, muffled/hoarse speech, stridor, noisy breathing (grunting), wheezing, use of accessory muscles to breathe
Abnormal positioning	Sniffing position, tripodding, prefers seated posture
Retractions	Supraclavicular, intercostal, or substernal, head bobbing (infants)
Flaring	Nasal flaring on inspiration

Circulation to skin	
Characteristic	Abnormal Features
Pallor	White/pale skin or mucous membranes
Mottling	Patchy skin discoloration due to variable vasoconstriction
Cyanosis	Bluish discoloration of skin/mucous membranes

Dieckmann, R. et al. (2010) The Pediatric Assessment Triangle: A novel approach for the rapid evaluation of children Pediatric Emergency Care, 26(4) 312-315; Horeczko, T, MD et al. (2013) The Pediatric Assessment Triangle: Accuracy of its application by nurses in the triage of children. Journal of Emergency Nursing. 39(2), 182-189.