

HC2 Measure visual acuity

About this workforce competence

This workforce competence covers the performance of tests of distance visual acuity with and without optical correction. It includes the assessment of visual acuity in patients of different ages including children (of 12 years and above) individuals with communication difficulties, and individuals with a range of refractive error or ocular disease.

Before measuring visual acuity, the patient must be prepared for the procedure, as described in Competence HC1.

Links

This workforce competence links with the following dimensions and levels within the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (October 2004)

Dimension HWB6: Assessment and treatment planning

Level: 2

Origin

This workforce competence has been developed by Skills for Health.

It is based on competence OVS 6 *Measure visual acuity* developed by the Health Care Science NOS Project.

Scope

Individuals

Patients of 12 years of age or older

Visual acuity tests

include:

- a) Snellen
- b) LogMAR
- c) Sheridan Gardner
- d) E test

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Performance criteria

You need to:

1. select the **visual acuity test** which is most appropriate for the **individual** according to their age, co-operation, ability, any special needs and local protocols
2. confirm whether the individual currently uses and has brought some form of optical correction
3. make sure that the patient is comfortable and is at the correct distance from the test chart
4. explain clearly to the individual how to perform the tests and which optical aid to wear according to which test has been chosen
5. correctly use an occluder and a pinhole in carrying out the tests
6. measure the best visual acuity unaided or with the appropriate optical aid, and with pinhole, where necessary, encouraging the patient at all stages to make their best interpretation of the letters
7. accurately record the results of the tests, including, if possible, any reason why the patient is unable to complete the test
8. record any adverse event or critical incident

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to apply:

National guidelines

1. A basic awareness of national guidelines on eye screening and on diabetes monitoring, management and education

Technical

2. A working understanding of the anatomy and physiology of the eye relating to vision and its measurement
3. A working understanding of different types of refractive error and their correction
4. A working understanding of best visual acuity
5. A working understanding of the non-refractive causes of reduced visual acuity and how they affect the measurement of visual acuity
6. A working understanding of the effect of diabetes and diabetic retinopathy on visual acuity
7. A working understanding of how to measure visual acuity and the range of tests for visual acuity, for example Snellen, LogMAR, E-test, Sheridan-Gardiner and the limitations of these tests
8. A working understanding of the principles and use of pinhole to correct reduced visual acuity and its limitations
9. A working understanding of how to measure visual acuity in patients with low vision

Working in partnership with patients

10. measuring visual acuity in children (12 years and older) and the A working understanding of how to measure visual acuity in patients with language or communication difficulties, learning disabilities or illiteracy
11. A working understanding of the social, cultural and economic background of the patient/carer group

Diabetes

12. A factual knowledge of causes, signs and symptoms of diabetes
13. A factual knowledge of the development of complications of diabetes
14. A factual knowledge of the effects of diabetes on a person's eyes

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Organisational and legal issues

15. A working understanding of your personal role, responsibilities and level of competence for performing investigations
16. A working understanding of relevant protocols and their correct interpretation
17. A working understanding of the role of the measurement of visual acuity measurement in a National Screening Programme for Diabetic Retinopathy
18. A working understanding of requirements for accurate and legible recording of information
19. A working understanding of adverse events and critical incidents and how to document them
20. A working understanding of the complaints system and how to handle complaints