

## The Clinical Examination of Infants and Children

### INITIAL CONTACT: (Getting Acquainted)

- A. Introduce yourself
- B. Greet both parent and child
- C. Make a positive comment directed toward the child
- D. Keep a non-threatening posture or position

### TAKING THE HISTORY:

- A. “What are your concerns today?” vs. “What’s the problem?”
- B. Use names – show respect for parent & child
- C. Include the child in the history if age-appropriate
- D. Get down to eye level
- E. Listen attentively and observe

### WHERE TO EXAMINE: (Wherever the child is most comfortable)

- A. < 6 months old: examining table is usually OK
- B.  $\geq 6$  months but  $\leq 3$  years: Parent’s lap
- C. 4 years and older: examining table is usually non-threatening

### HELPFUL HINTS:

- A. Wash hands with warm water just prior to your examination
- B. Don’t ask – Gently tell the child what is expected:  
*“Johnny, I want you to lie down on your back so I can check your tummy”*  
*instead of*  
*“Johnny, will you please lie down on the table for me?”*
- C. Maintain a calm, encouraging tone of voice throughout the exam
- D. Explain what you are getting ready to do next; Take out the mystery
- E. With two children, examine the one most likely to cooperate first
- F. Learn the “Art of Distraction”

### THE SEQUENCE OF THE EXAM:

- A. Examine the non-threatening parts first
- B. Heart, lung and abdominal exam require a relatively cooperative patient
- C. Complete undressing is usually unnecessary
- D. Save the ENT exam (and other difficult areas) until last
- E. Maintain careful observation throughout

### THE IMPORTANCE OF OBSERVATION:

- A. Probably the single most valuable part of the entire examination
- B. Should occur continuously from the time you greet the patient until the end of the visit, not just during the physical examination
- C. Key areas to observe
  - a. Interactions with environment, caregiver, general appearance, tone, color, activity, respiratory effort and quality of cry
  - b. Response to the examiner