

OCONEE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Age-Specific Competencies

Age-specific competencies are tools for learning more about how to best meet each patient’s unique needs as you care for him or her. By demonstrating your understanding of age-related differences, you can ensure that our facility meets Joint Commission standards.

There are many ways to learn about each patient’s specific needs. Depending on the patient and your job, it may be appropriate to:

- Ask the patient questions (and talk with his or her family)
- Ask you supervisor for information or training
- Look for clues, such as what the patient hears or keep in his or her room, or how he or she acts around others.
- Talk with co-workers, community members or others who may know about the needs of people in a certain age group.
- Read about the age group.

Each patient is unique.

Always keep in mind that:

- Growth and development flow general patterns, but every person grows and develops in his or her own unique way.
- Not every member of a cultural group may share all of its values, beliefs or practices.
- A patient may appear similar to you, but still be different from you in certain ways.

Avoid stereotyping a patient – consider all the factors that may affect his or her care needs.

AGE	HEALTHY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT	WAYS TO PROVIDE AGE-SPECIFIC CARE
Infants and Toddlers (birth to age 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical growth and development are rapid, especially in infancy. Building muscle skills is important, from rolling and standing as an infant to running and drinking from a cup as a toddler. - Developing trust and a sense of being loved is important in infancy. It helps the toddler’s attempts at independence. - Play is important to help build social and other skills. - Infants communicate by crying and making simple sounds. Toddlers learn simple words and sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educate parents about the need for checkups, screenings and immunizations. - Ensure the child’s safety and comfort. For example, keep crib rails up, offer age appropriate toys, cuddle an upset child and talk in soothing tones. - Explain procedures to parents and the child in simple terms. Allow time for questions. Let the child touch equipment or try it on a doll or stuffed animal. - Keep the child with parents if possible. Involve parents in care (for example, have them choose the child’s food). - Have parents demonstrate procedures back to you to show understanding. - Discuss parents’ questions and concerns about caring for their child. Teach about feeding, hygiene, safety and other ways to promote healthy development.
Young	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children grow more slowly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to stress to parents the need for

<p>children (ages 4 to 6)</p>	<p>during these years. They are active and develop strength and coordination. They are able to dress themselves and are toilet-trained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young children are aware of others' feelings. They may have fears (for example, about being separated from parents or being injured). They enjoy playing with other children and making friends. They begin to develop a sense of privacy. - Young children are curious and imaginative. They ask many questions and enjoy conversation. They like stories and make-believe play. 	<p>checkups, screenings and immunizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain procedures and objects in ways the child can understand. Avoid words that might be scary. Show how equipment is used. Use toy equipment or other visual aids. Give the child chances to help. - Reassure the child that the procedure is no a punishment. - With a child 4 to 6 years of age, explain the procedure just before you perform it. - Give the child chances to express feelings and ask questions (through talk and play). Encourage a 4 to 6 year old patient to bring a security object, such as a blanket. - Ask parents about any concerns they may have (for example, with setting limits). Ask the child questions too (about school or friends, for example). Teach about healthy eating, hygiene and safety, as the child grows more independent.
<p>Older children (ages 7 to 12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growth continues at a slower pace until a "spurt" at puberty. Muscle skills continue to develop. Older children can do a variety of activities, from sports to crafts. - Older children can accept rules and responsibilities (such as caring for pets). Completing tasks, mastering new skills and having achievements recognized, help build self-esteem. Older children enjoy doing things with friends (generally of the same sex). They want more privacy. - Older children enjoy riddles, plays on words, etc. they can read, write, do math and memorize. They have a better understanding of time. They enjoy collecting and classifying things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to remind parents about the need for immunizations, checkups and screenings. - Ask the child about friends, interests, accomplishments and concerns (for example, body changes). Ask for parents' views, too. Allow time for the child and parents to ask questions. - Explain procedures and equipment in advance. Use correct terms and visual aids. Give the child a tour. Respect privacy (for example, by keeping the child covered during exams). Give the child chances to help. Praise cooperative behavior. - Teach the child about healthy and safe behaviors (including not using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs). Encourage parents to talk with their child about these and other important issues (including age-appropriate discussions about sexuality).
<p>Adolescents (ages 13 to 20)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Girls generally begin puberty about 2 years earlier than boys (it may start in "older childhood" for girls). A growth spurt may affect coordination for a time. Sex features develop (such as breasts in girls and facial hair in boys). - Adolescents are developing an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasize the continued need for checkups, screenings and immunizations - Provide privacy for procedures and teaching. Teach using correct terms and visual aids. Discuss concerns. Encourage involvement in care and decisions. Know the age at which an adolescent can legally authorize his or her own treatment as per specific state law.

	<p>identity. They may have emotional swings and face peer pressure. They may be self-conscious (about body image, for example). They become interested in close relationships. Eating disorders may be a concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adolescents can solve problems better. They think about the future (for example, their career). They can think more abstractly (for example, about values and about concepts such as justice). They may not think about long-term consequences of their actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage hospital patients to keep in contact with friends and family. - Teach about healthy habits (nutrition, exercise, hygiene and safety). Also teach about avoiding pregnancy and health risks, such as sexually transmitted diseases and alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. - Encourage parents to stay involved in their child's life. Give parents and the child information about normal changes of adolescence.
<p>Young adults (ages 21 to 39)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young adults reach sexual maturity and their adult height and weight. They are more comfortable with their body image. - Young adults develop a personal identity and self-reliance. They may experience sexual intimacy, choose a mate and raise a family. They establish a career. - Young adults reflect on changes in their bodies and their lives. They can look at problems from different points of view. They establish values and use them to make life choices. They evaluate new information in terms of their experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to encourage immunizations, checkups and screenings. - Encourage hospital patients to keep in contact with family and friends. - Assess the patient for stress related to new adult roles. Encourage him or her to talk about feelings and concerns, and about how an illness or injury may affect plans, family and finances. - Involve the patient and close family members in decision-making and education. Educate about injury prevention and a healthy lifestyle (through exercise, weight control, hygiene, etc). Explain the benefits of knowing this information. - Use appropriate teaching materials. Encourage the patient to take part in group learning situations, such as support groups.
<p>Middle adults (ages 40 to 64)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adults aged 40 to 64 years begin to experience physical changes, such as decreased endurance. Women experience menopause. Illness or injury may interfere with plans. Chronic illness may develop. - Adults of these ages develop a concern for the next generation. They help their children gain independence. They may become active in the community (for example, through volunteering). They develop new roles with aging parents and plan for retirement. They 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to encourage checkups, screenings and immunizations. - Encourage as much self-care as possible. - Allow time to talk about frustrations, accomplishments, dreams and any concerns about illness. Talk about stress. Provide help with finding resources to meet healthcare costs. - Educate about healthy lifestyles (stress management, weight managements, etc.). Educate about procedures and safe use of medications. Use appropriate materials. - Involve the patient and close family in decisions about care. Start teaching about advanced medical directives.

	<p>begin emotionally preparing for death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These adults may seek further education, possibly to make a career change. They are interested in learning. They reflect on their lives and accomplishments. 	
Adults (ages 65 to 79)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adults aged 65 to 79 years experience changes in skin, muscles and sensory abilities. They have a higher risk of health problems, such as infection and chronic illness. They may sleep more, often by napping during the day. Many older adults stay in good health. - These adults need to adapt to changes. They take up new activities and roles. They may experience depression, loneliness and anxiety over changes or about the future. - Adults of these ages may have a reduced attention span. They may make decisions and remember things (such as names) more slowly. They may need more time to learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stress the need for checkups, screenings and immunizations. Encourage healthy habits (nutrition, exercise, hygiene, etc.) and social activity. - Educate about safety measures (including fall prevention, safe medication use and using caution with hot water). - Provide a safe, comfortable environment (night light, proper temperature, etc.). Allow time for rest. Adapt procedures to physical changes (fragile skin, for example). - Give the patient chances to reminisce, to help promote a positive self-image. - Speak clearly and avoid background noise during teaching. Use larger print materials and ensure enough light. Give information in short segments and repeat as needed. Avoid rushing. - Encourage the patient and family to take and active role in care. Discuss concerns. Talk about family and other support systems.
Adults (ages 80 to older)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adults aged 80 years and older have a higher risk of infections, dehydration, poor nutrition and chronic illness. Effects of chronic illness may be more severe. Mobility becomes harder. - These adults may feel isolated or upset due to loss of family, friends, sensory abilities or financial independence. They may lose self-confidence as their abilities decline. - Adults of these ages reflect on their lives and come to an acceptance of death. They can still learn, but at slower rates. They may have reduced attention spans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to stress the need for checkups, screenings and immunizations. - Encourage physical and social activity, encourage reminiscing. - Promote, and assist with, self-care and independence as much as possible. Assist with end-of-life planning.\ - Monitor age-related risks, such as skin problems. Adapt techniques as needed (for example, using extra caution when moving or touching the patient to avoid bruising). Allow for frequent periods of rest. - Ensure safety measures to prevent falls and burns. Educate about home safety and safe medication use. Educate in an appropriate environment with suitable materials. Involve the patient and family or other caregiver. Teach while the patient is at peak energy. Avoid rushing.