

# Rapid Assessment: Paediatric Assessment Triangle

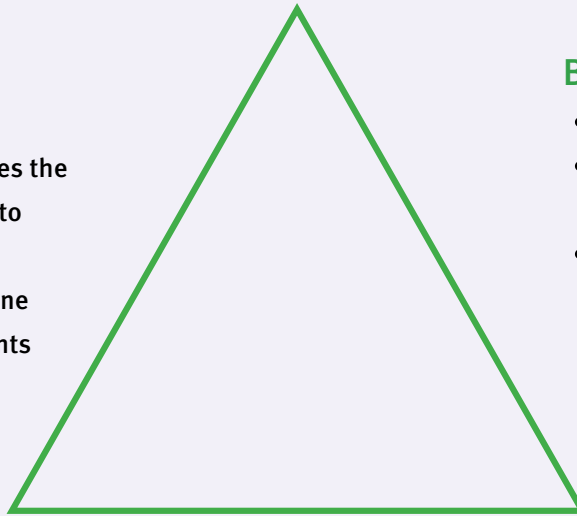
A rapid assessment can be utilised to quickly and efficiently assess an unwell child to determine if immediate intervention is required. A commonly used rapid assessment tool is the American Academy of Paediatrics – Paediatric Assessment Triangle (PAT). It is undertaken in less than a minute and assists in identifying red flags and uses familiar language that improves communication of patient status between clinicians.

## Paediatric Assessment Triangle (PAT)

The presence of any of the below may indicate that the child's is very ill or that their clinical condition is deteriorating.

### Appearance

- Alert / Verbal / Pain / Unresponsive (AVPU): Does the child require stimulation to garner a response?
- Flat, poor/rigid muscle tone
- Not interacting with parents
- Absent or abnormal cry
- Non-blanching rash



### Breathing

- Airway compromise
- Noisy breathing: grunting, gasping or stridor
- Respirations: absent, decreased, moderate or severe respiratory distress

### Circulation

- Pale, cold peripheries, mottled skin, cyanosis
- Prolonged central capillary refill time (greater than 2 seconds)
- Fever in those under the age of 3 months
- Active bleeding

This Paediatric Assessment Triangle (PAT) is adapted from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Pediatric Education for Prehospital Professionals. Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publishers; 2013.



## ALERT

Infants and children can deteriorate rapidly, therefore early intervention is imperative. Seek prompt medical assessment in a child who meets any of the above criteria.

Commence cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in any infant or child found to have absent respirations.



## For further information:

[CHQ Nursing Standard: Clinical Assessment of the paediatric patient \(Rapid Assessment/Primary & Secondary Assessment/Vital Signs\) \(QH only\)](#)

## References:

AAP American Academy of Paediatrics, (2013). Pediatric Education for Prehospital Professionals (PEPP). 3rd Edition. Jones & Bartlett, Sudbury, MA.

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service. (2023, February 24). Clinical Assessment of the Paediatric Patient – Rapid Assessment / Primary and Secondary Survey / Vital Signs. Queensland Health Intranet. Retrieved December 4, 2023 from [https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/724240/ns\\_00241.pdf](https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/724240/ns_00241.pdf)

Fernández A, Ares MI, Garcia S, Martinez-Indart L, Mintegi S, Benito J. (2017). The Validity of the Pediatric Assessment Triangle as the First Step in the Triage Process in a Pediatric Emergency Department. *Pediatric Emergency Care*. 33(4), 234-238. doi: 10.1097/PEC.0000000000000717.

Horeczko, T., Enriquez, B., McGrath, N., Gausche-Hill, M., & Lewis, R. (2013). The Pediatric Assessment Triangle: Accuracy of Its Application by Nurses in the Triage of Children. *Journal Of Emergency Nursing*, 39(2), 182-189. doi: 10.1016/j.jen.2011.12.020

**This Queensland Paediatric Emergency Skill Sheet was developed and revised  
by the Emergency Care of Children working group.  
Initial work was funded by the Queensland Emergency Department Strategic Advisory Panel.**

### Skill Sheet Legal Disclaimer

The information contained in these Queensland Paediatric Emergency Care skill sheets is for information purposes only. It was developed to inform emergency nursing care, but can also be applied by other clinicians acting within their scope of practice. The information has been prepared using a multidisciplinary approach with reference to the best information and evidence available at the time of preparation. No representation, warranty or assurance is given that the information is entirely complete, current, or accurate in every respect. The skill sheets are not a substitute for clinical judgement, knowledge and expertise, or medical advice. Variation from the skill sheets, taking into account individual circumstances may be appropriate. This does not address all elements of standard practice and accepts that individual clinicians are responsible for the following:

- Providing care within the context of locally available resources, expertise, and scope of practice.
- Supporting consumer rights and informed decision making in partnership with healthcare practitioners including the right to decline intervention or ongoing management.

- Advising consumers of their choices in an environment that is culturally appropriate and which enables comfortable and confidential discussion. This includes the use of interpreter services where necessary.
- Ensuring informed consent is obtained prior to delivering care.
- Meeting all legislative requirements and professional standards.
- Applying standard precautions, and additional precautions as necessary, when delivering care.
- Documenting all care in accordance with mandatory and local requirements.

Children's Health Queensland disclaims, to the maximum extent permitted by law, all responsibility and all liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages and costs incurred for any reason associated with the use of this skill sheet, including the materials within or referred to throughout this document being in any way inaccurate, out of context, incomplete or unavailable.

