

RESPIRATORY PHYSICAL EXAM

POSTERIOR & LATERAL

INSPECTION & PALPATION:

- Inspect posterior thorax and lungs for abnormalities
Positive: asymmetry, deformity, use of accessory muscles, cyanosis
- Palpate posterior thorax for tenderness, masses
Positive: focal tenderness, subcutaneous emphysema, palpable mass
- Assess tactile fremitus (8 points, 4 bilaterally)
Positive: increased fremitus (consolidation), decreased fremitus (effusion, pneumothorax)
- Perform chest expansion test at T10
Positive: asymmetric or reduced expansion → pleural effusion, fibrosis, pneumonia

PERCUSSION:

- Percuss posterior chest at 18 points (5 bilaterally posterior, 4 bilaterally lateral) for intensity, pitch, duration
Positive: dullness (consolidation, effusion), hyperresonance (pneumothorax, emphysema)
- Differentiate between dullness and hyperresonance
Positive: localized dullness or diffuse hyperresonance suggesting pathology

AUSCULTATION:

- Auscultate at same 18 points for breath sounds, intensity, pitch, duration, adventitious sounds
Positive: crackles (pneumonia, CHF), wheezes (asthma, COPD), rhonchi (secretions), absent breath sounds (effusion, pneumothorax)

ANTERIOR

INSPECTION & PALPATION:

- Inspect anterior thorax and lungs for abnormalities
Positive: retractions, asymmetry, scars, deformity
- Palpate anterior thorax for tenderness, masses
Positive: chest wall tenderness, palpable nodules
- Assess tactile fremitus (6 points, 3 bilaterally)
Positive: increased fremitus (consolidation), decreased fremitus (effusion, air trapping)

PERCUSSION:

- Percuss anterior chest at 8 points (4 bilaterally) for intensity, pitch, duration
Positive: dullness or hyperresonance as above

AUSCULTATION:

- Auscultate at same 8 points for inspiration/expiration, intensity, adventitious sounds
Positive: abnormal breath sounds, crackles, wheezes, absent sounds

SPECIAL TESTS:

- Whispered pectoriloquy
Positive: whispered words heard clearly → lung consolidation
- Bronchophony
Positive: spoken words heard louder/clearer → consolidation
- Egophony
Positive: patient says “E” but examiner hears “A” → consolidation