

Lippincott's

Textbook *for* Nursing Assistants

A Humanistic
Approach
to Caregiving



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Susan Lewsen



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A Humanistic Approach to Caregiving

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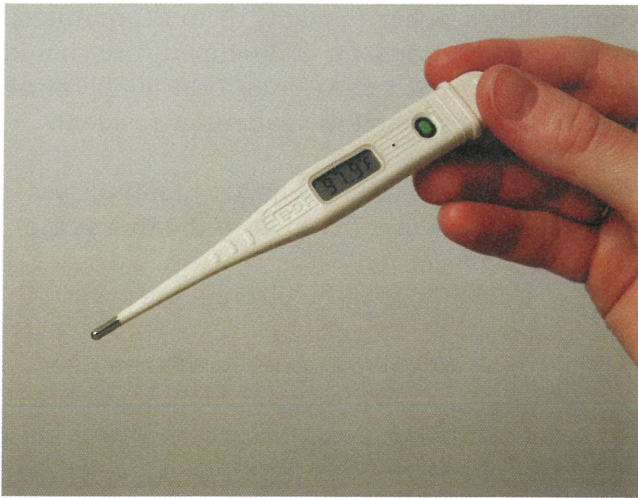
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Some drugs and medical devices presented in this publication have Food and Drug Administration (FDA) clearance for limited use in restricted research settings. It is the responsibility of the health care provider to ascertain the FDA status of each drug or device planned for use in his or her clinical practice.



A

FIGURE 16-4

Battery-operated electronic and digital thermometers display the person's temperature on a screen. (A) A digital thermometer. The battery in a digital thermometer is usually not rechargeable. When the battery is depleted, the thermometer is thrown away. (B) An electronic thermometer. Electronic thermometers come with battery chargers, which keep the battery continuously charged. Always remember to return an electronic thermometer to its charger after each use. (A Chris Priest/Photo Researchers, Inc.; B courtesy of Medline Industries, Inc.)



B

Tympanic Thermometers

A tympanic thermometer (Fig. 16-5) is used to measure the body temperature in the ear. The probe of this battery-operated instrument is inserted into the ear canal, where it rests near the eardrum (tympanic membrane). The person's temperature is displayed on a screen after a few seconds. Tympanic thermometers are often used for children because they allow a temperature to be measured in a safe, quick, and relatively painless manner.

**FIGURE 16-5**

A tympanic thermometer is inserted into the ear canal. (Samuel Ashfield/Photo Researchers, Inc.)

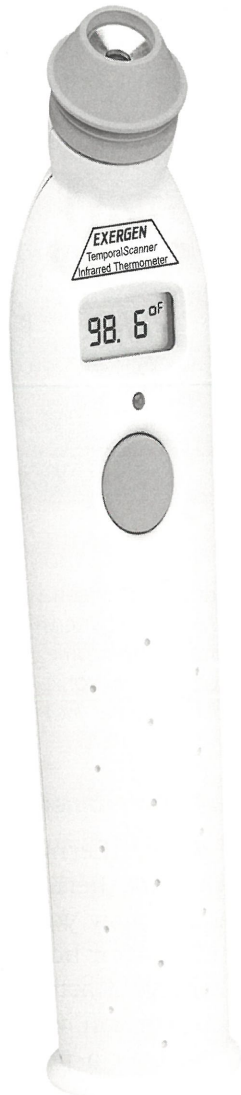
Temporal Artery Thermometers

The temporal artery thermometer represents the latest development in thermometer technology (Fig. 16-6). Remember how your mother used to place her cool hand on your hot forehead to check for a fever? The temporal artery thermometer is simply a "high-tech" version of Mom's gesture. As the device is passed over a person's forehead, it detects the body temperature at numerous points. It then performs a series of calculations on the readings to arrive at the person's peak body temperature. The temporal artery thermometer is even more accurate than a tympanic thermometer, and it is considered the least invasive of all of the thermometers available (because it does not have to be inserted into any body opening).

Sites for Measuring Body Temperature

Mouth (Oral Temperature)

Measuring a person's body temperature by placing the thermometer in his or her mouth is simple and causes the person minimal discomfort. Because the thermometer is being placed in the mouth, which is not an entirely enclosed space, the temperature reading may not be as accurate as with some of the other methods. For example, measuring the temperature in the rectum or ear gives a more accurate reading, because the

**FIGURE 16-6**

A temporal artery thermometer. The scanner is placed in the middle of the person's forehead and swept toward the ear, stopping behind the ear. (Courtesy of Exergen Corporation, 2004.)

thermometer is placed into a tightly closed space. However, many times, the reading provided by placing the thermometer in the mouth is accurate enough. An oral temperature may be measured using a glass thermometer (Procedure 16-1) or an electronic or digital thermometer (Procedure 16-2).

If a person eats, drinks, smokes, or chews gum within 15 minutes of having his or her temperature taken orally, the temperature measurement may not be accurate. If one of your patients or residents has engaged in any of these activities shortly before you intend to take his temperature orally, then you must either use a different method or wait for a period of time as specified by

your facility's policy (usually 15 to 30 minutes). In certain situations, an oral temperature should not be taken. For example, an oral temperature should not be taken if the patient or resident:

- Is unconscious
- Is unable to keep his or her mouth closed (necessary in order to keep the thermometer in place)
- Is unable to breathe through his or her nose
- Is likely to bite the oral thermometer (for example, a child younger than 5 years, a disoriented person, or a person with a history of seizures)
- Is coughing or sneezing
- Has recently had mouth surgery or an injury to the mouth
- Is receiving oxygen by a face mask (because the oxygen may cause the temperature measurement to be inaccurate)

Rectum (Rectal Temperature)

Measuring a person's body temperature by placing the thermometer in the rectum provides a more accurate measurement of the person's body temperature because the thermometer is placed in an enclosed space. However, placing the thermometer rectally is also the most risky method of taking a temperature, and it can be uncomfortable and embarrassing for the patient or resident.

A rectal temperature may be obtained using a glass thermometer (Procedure 16-3) or an electronic or digital thermometer (Procedure 16-4). In facilities where the same type of glass thermometer is used for both oral and rectal temperatures, the thermometers for rectal use have a red dot on the end. Similarly, when an electronic thermometer is used, the red probe is used rectally and the blue probe is used orally. The thermometer must be lubricated and inserted carefully into the rectum, not more than one-half inch in a child or one inch in an adult.

When you are taking a temperature rectally, it is important that you stay with the patient or resident during the entire procedure, both to hold the thermometer in place and to make sure that the person is all right. The thermometer could stimulate the vagus nerve, an important nerve that begins in the brain and sends branches to the heart, lungs, stomach, and rectum. Stimulation of the vagus nerve may temporarily decrease the person's heart rate and