

Medical Investigations for Children in Institutions

1. Objectives of Medical Investigations & Protocol:

- Establishing the baseline health status of every child who is institutionalized.
- Early identification/ diagnosis so that necessary treatment can be started at the earliest.
- Ensuring the use of standard/universal testing protocols to enable agencies to provide children with basic healthcare.
- Meeting the health needs of vulnerable children, in keeping with socio-legal frameworks of child rights and safety.

2. For Whom and when:

The medical investigations and tests recommended in this protocol are for all children admitted in child care agencies and institutions, which are mandated to ensure care and protection of vulnerable children. They need to be conducted at the time of joining the institution, immediately after other in-take procedures (such as assessment & history-taking) are completed.

3. By Whom:

A government hospital or a laboratory equipped to administer the tests may do so for the agency—services are likely to be free or less costly in a government hospital.

On completion of tests, the results need to be read by a physician/ paediatrician to determine whether they are alright or whether further testing and/or medical treatment is required.

4. Guidelines on Preparing Children for Medical Investigation:

Children tend to be fearful and overwhelmed when they enter the institution. Medical investigations and inquiry may cause them additional anxiety in new place. Further, children have a right to know about their health and the investigations that are being conducted for this purpose. Therefore, the agency needs to prepare them for all medical investigations scheduled to be conducted. Here are some ways to do this in a helpful and reassuring manner:

- For general health check-ups, tell children that:
 - Their health and well-being is very important to the agency and we want to make sure that they stay well.
 - Some medical tests and investigations will need to be done to check if they have any deficiencies (iron deficiency anemia...) /infections/ illnesses.
 - If there are any deficiencies or problems, the agency staff would ensure that the child got the right treatment and medications to get well.
 - (On the day scheduled) a designated staff would accompany the child for the medical investigations—so she/he would not be alone or need to feel afraid.
- In contexts of sexual abuse/sex work/high risk sexual activity, tell children:
- We want to ensure that your health is alright. When children have been in unsafe circumstances and have been hurt/ abused, they may acquire some infections. Testing for this will help us identify if the infection is indeed present and start the appropriate treatment fast. (Sexually abused children/ trafficked children).
- When you take risks, like having (unprotected) sex with unknown or more than one person or use substances (like injecting drugs), there are chances of injury and disease—especially as we do not know what infections those people have. So, we need to

do some tests to check for any possible infection so we can treat it. (For children engaging in high risk sexual activities).

- Since you have been hurt and abused by someone in ways that are physical and sexual (or you have been voluntarily engaging in sexual activity), there are chances of you being pregnant. It would be important to do a test and find out if you are pregnant, for a few different reasons: i) doing a test early enough may help you terminate the pregnancy in case you do not want to continue with the pregnancy/ keep the baby i.e. if we delay finding out, it may be hard to implement the medical processes necessary to terminate the pregnancy; ii) in case you wish to keep the baby, then it will be critical for you to maintain your health and your baby's health in certain ways—so finding out early will help us guide you on how to do this. So, finding out sooner about whether or not you are pregnant will help you make some decisions comfortably... and offer you more options in this regard. (for children at risk of pregnancy)

5. Recommended Medical Investigations for Children in Institutions

	Purpose	Tests	For Whom/ When
Physical Examination	Head circumference for children below 5 years	Head circumference for children below 5 years	All Children at the time of in-take/ institutionalization
	Height Weight	Height	
		Weight	
		BMI	
	Head to toe examination for any dysmorphism, deformity, deficiency, allergy (and other general physical examination)	PICCKLE	
	Blood pressure PulseRate	CVS	
		RS	
	Identification marks	PA	
		CNS	
		Skin	
	Vision		
	Hearing		
Pubertal/ genital assessment - in presence of a female attendant or pediatrician to assess for stage of puberty and health	Menarche attained (Yes/No): Age of Menarchy: Last Menstrual Period: Tanner's Maturity Test:		
Laboratory Investigations	Complete blood count	Hb%, TC, DC, PC, ESR, PT, APTT, PS, MCV, MCH, MCHC, PCV	All Children at the time of in-take/ institutionalization
	Random Blood Sugar		
	Renal function Test	Creatinine, Total Urea	
	Thyroid function Test	T3 , T4, TSH	
	Serum Electrolytes	Sodium, Potassium, Chloride, bicarbonates	

	Liver Function Test	SGOT, SGPT, ALP, Albumin, Bilirubin, Total Protein	
	Calcium Profile	Serum Calcium, Phosphate	
	Blood Group		
	Sexually Transmitted Diseases	HBsAg, HIV	
	Tuberculosis	Mantoux	
	Pregnancy	UPT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Based on menarche attainment - If last period has been missed. -Sexual abuse is reported to/ known by agency. -Children rescued from trafficking/ sex work. - Sexually active children.
Developmental & Psychosocial Evaluation	Developmental assessment (cognitive, social and speech & language, emotional development)	NIMHANS Project Assessment Formats (will be provided)	All Children at the time of in-take/ institutionalization
	Psychosocial Well-being	NIMHANS Project Assessment Formats (will be provided) along with agency formats	All Children at the time of in-take/ institutionalization