

Medical Assistants Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Are medical assistants required to be licensed or certified by the State of Arizona to perform procedures within their "scope of practice"?

Medical assistants are not required to be licensed by the State of Arizona. However, the medical assistant's employer and/or supervising physician's malpractice insurance carrier may require that the medical assistant be certified by a national or private association.

Regarding medical assistants, what is the phrase "administer medications" referring to?

The phrase "administer medications" refers to the direct application of medication by simple injections, ingestion and inhalation, or pre-measured medications. For the Board's purposes, the phrase "administer medications" regarding a medical assistant means to inject, handle, or provide medications to a patient after a physician, physician assistant or another appropriate licensed person, has verified the correct medication and dosage.

Are medical assistants allowed to administer injections of scheduled drugs?

If the medical assistant has undergone the appropriate training, he or she is allowed to administer injections of scheduled drugs once the licensed person has verified the correct medication and dosage, and the injection is intramuscular, intradermal, or subcutaneous. The supervising physician, physician assistant or another appropriate licensed person must be on the premises as required in A.R.S. § 32-1456. However, this does not include the administration of any anesthetic agent.

Are medical assistants allowed to start or disconnect IV's or administer injections or medication into an IV?

Medical assistants cannot start or disconnect IV's or administer injections or medication into an IV. These procedures are considered invasive, and therefore, not within the medical assistant's scope of practice.

Are medical assistants allowed to perform nasal smears?

Medical assistants may perform nasal smears if the procedure is limited to the opening of the nasal cavity.

Are medical assistants permitted to perform "finger sticks"?

Medical assistants may perform finger sticks if they have received the proper training. The finger stick procedure is considered the pricking of a finger in order to collect a sample of blood.

Are medical assistants allowed to swab the throat in order to preserve the specimen in a throat culture?

Medical assistants may swab a patient's throat to preserve the specimen in a throat culture if they have received the proper training.

Are medical assistants allowed to give narcotic injections?

Medical assistants may inject narcotics into a patient by intradermal, intramuscular, or subcutaneous methods once the licensed person has verified the correct medication and dosage. The medical assistant may not inject anesthetic agents.

Are medical assistants allowed to have access to the keys to the narcotic medication cabinet?

This decision must be made by the supervising healthcare provider.

Are medical assistants allowed to chart pupillary responses?

Medical assistants are not allowed to chart pupillary responses. The charting of pupillary responses is considered an assessment, which is a form of interpretation. Medical assistants are not allowed to read, interpret, or diagnose symptoms or test results.

Are medical assistants allowed to insert urine catheters?

Medical assistants may not insert urine catheters. Insertion of a urine catheter is considered an invasive procedure and therefore, not within the medical assistant's scope of practice.

Are medical assistants allowed to inject collagen?

Medical assistants may not inject collagen. The injection of collagen does not fall within the medical assistant's scope of practice.

Are medical assistants allowed to use lasers to remove hair, wrinkles, scars, moles, or other blemishes?

Medical assistants may not use lasers to remove hair, wrinkles, scars, moles, or other blemishes.

Are medical assistants allowed to apply orthopedic splints in emergency situations, such as splints in a physician's office?

Medical assistants are not allowed to apply orthopedic splints. Medical assistants may remove casts, splints, and other external devices.

Are medical assistants allowed to interpret the results of skin tests?

Medical assistants are not allowed to interpret the results of skin tests. Medical assistants may, however, measure and describe the test reaction and make a record in the patient's chart.

Can a medical assistant lawfully perform spirometry pulmonary function testing?

A medical assistant may perform spirometric pulmonary function testing if the medical assistant has undergone proper training and the test is a usual and customary part of the medical practice where the medical assistant is employed.

Can medical assistants perform hearing tests?

Medical assistants may perform hearing tests under the direct supervision of a licensed physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner.

Are medical assistants allowed to administer flu shots and other vaccines?

Medical assistants may administer flu shots and other vaccines after receiving the proper training and the licensed practitioner has verified the correct medication and dosage. In addition, the supervising practitioner must be present in the facility.

Are medical assistants allowed to hand patients prescription medications?

Medical assistants may hand patients prescription medications that are properly labeled and pre-packaged that have been ordered by a licensed physician, podiatrist, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or nurse midwife. The prescriber must first ensure the medication has the patient's name affixed to the package, the medication, dosage, and provide consultation.