

# Using Chaperones During Sensitive Exams and Procedures

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Michigan Medicine provides a chaperone when appropriate during sensitive examinations (exams) or procedures. Using chaperones is part of Michigan Medicine's commitment for safe and responsible care. A chaperone acts as a witness for the patient and the healthcare provider during sensitive medical exams or procedures.

## **What is considered “a sensitive exam or procedure”?**

A sensitive examination or procedure includes the physical examination of, or a procedure involving, the genitalia or rectum (regardless of gender) or female breast. Chaperones will always be provided for other exams or procedures if the patient requests it.

## **Why do we need a chaperone?**

The chaperone assists the patient and the healthcare provider in completing sensitive exams and procedures in a safe and respectful manner. The chaperone's job is to:

- Protect and enhance the patient's comfort, safety, privacy, security, and/or dignity during sensitive exams or procedures.
- Provide protection to healthcare professionals against false allegations of improper behavior.

## **Who is the chaperone?**

The chaperone may be a health professional or a trained staff member. Whenever possible, the chaperone should be the same gender as the patient.

Family members or friends of an adult patient should not serve as chaperones.

They may be present during sensitive exams or procedures, in addition to the chaperone, if the patient requests it.

A family member or a guardian may serve as a chaperone for children up to age 10 in some exams or procedures. Ask your doctor if you are able to serve as a chaperone for your child's exam or procedure.

### **What can I expect during a sensitive appointment with a chaperone?**

During the exam or procedure, the chaperone will stand in a location where they are able to observe the exam or procedure, and assist as needed. The chaperone may provide support to the patient with personal hygiene, toileting, or dressing requirements if the patient requests or needs it.

### **Can I decline to have a chaperone present in my exam or procedure?**

Adults who are able to make their own medical decisions have the right to decline (opt-out of) having a chaperone present in their exam or procedures. This will be noted in the patient's record. In some cases, the healthcare provider may decide not to perform a particular exam or procedure without a chaperone. For patients considered to be vulnerable or lacking the capacity to give informed consent, it is **mandatory** for a chaperone to be present during a sensitive exam or procedure.

### **Are chaperones used during virtual and home care visits?**

Physical contact does not occur during virtual visits, but sometimes the genital, breast and rectal area require virtual examination. The same care and respect provided in physical sensitive exams are provided in virtual ones. In these situation we may offer a chaperone or allow one to be present at a patient's request. The chaperone can be a third party, witnessing the virtual examination via split screens or can be present with the health professional or the patient.

Virtual visits are not recorded, but with the patient's permission, the health professional may take photos which are then saved in the electronic health record.

Visits made to a patient within the patient's home by a visiting health professional do not require a chaperone.

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Based on UMHHC Policy 62-01-016

*The Use of Chaperones During Sensitive Examinations and Procedures*

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