

Pelvic Exams on Patients Under Anesthesia

What is a pelvic exam under anesthesia?

Sometimes healthcare providers must perform a pelvic exam, inserting one or more fingers into the vaginal canal, during an office visit or before surgery to fully understand a person's anatomy and where the uterus is located. For surgery, these exams are often performed both before and after the person is sedated because during sedation the person's muscles are fully relaxed and easier to examine.

Who might perform a pelvic exam under anesthesia for my care?

While fully trained doctors and nurses are involved in supervising and providing your care at Michigan Medicine, we are also a teaching institution. Medical students can and do participate in procedures as part of their education, including performing pelvic examinations on patients under anesthesia.

Being able to adequately take care of female patients is a critical skill that the University of Michigan Medical School wants to make sure that all of its students possess.

What is the Michigan Medicine policy for when a student might perform an educational pelvic examination on a patient under anesthesia?

A student will not perform an “educational” pelvic examination on a patient under anesthesia unless all of the following conditions are met:

1. The patient has provided explicit consent (has agreed) to the teaching pelvic examination;
2. The performance of the pelvic examination is related to that surgical procedure or diagnostic examination;
3. The student met the patient before anesthetization; and
4. The exam is done under the direct supervision of an educator.

You have the right to decline to have an educational pelvic examination under anesthesia. If you would not like to have an educational pelvic examination under anesthesia, please talk to your provider.

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