Vital Signs:
It is important to assess, monitor, and document vital signs when providing skilled services for every patient.

Assessment of the patient’s baseline and subsequent physiologic state, including response to activity/exercise is essential to good patient management.

There are many situations in which patients could have an abnormal response to activity/exercise. For example:

- Patients who take cardiovascular medications may have altered heart rate (HR) and blood pressure (BP) responses to activity
- Patients who get up after periods of prolonged bedrest are at risk for orthostatic changes which increases risk for falls
- Post-surgical orthopedic patients on anticoagulant medication may have an increased vulnerability to having an abnormal response to exercise stress
- A healthy appearing patient with no prior history of cardiovascular disease may have an abnormal HR or BP response to exercise that could turn out to be an early marker for cardiovascular disease and should be reported to nursing.

Assessment of Heart Rate, Blood Pressure:
Heart rate and blood pressure measurements provide clinicians with information about the patient’s response to activity/exercise. Heart rate and blood pressure measurement should include documentation of the position of the patient, the extremity used for measurement, and the context for measurement. It is always important to know the patient’s baseline vital signs prior to initiating therapy or increased activity.

Heart Rate:
- Measured by auscultation with stethoscope
  - Normal heart/pulse rate 60-100 bpm
  - Bradycardia < 60
  - Tachycardia > 100
  - Supraventricular tachycardia (SVT) > 160

Blood Pressure:
- Systolic measures pressure in the arteries when the heart contracts
- Diastolic measures pressure in the arteries between beats when the heart is refilling
- Systolic blood pressure is considered a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease. The greater the pressure, the stiffer the arteries, likely more plaque buildup.
- We always want to follow doctor’s orders if there are limits
- Know patient’s baseline vital signs

We can offer enormous benefits to our patients by assessing physiological responses to activity/exercise. Some of these benefits include but are not limited to:

- Avoidance of further medical complications
- Reduction in the risk for re-hospitalization
- Early identification and referral for further medical evaluation of underlying disease
- Reduction in fall risk