

The Paediatric Triangle

Nursing

A first impression formed from across the room, before any equipment is used.

Appearance, work of breathing and circulation to the skin, judged by looking and listening alone.

SIDES
Three

EQUIPMENT
None

THEN
Full ABCDE

- Appearance — tone, interaction, consolability, gaze, cry
- Work of breathing — noises, position, recession, flaring
- Circulation — pallor, mottling, cyanosis
- Formed before touching the child
- Takes seconds and needs no equipment
- Abnormal in any side means act now

LOOK FOR IT

A quiet, floppy child who does not object to being examined is more worrying than a screaming one.

Educational reference. A first impression, not an assessment. Escalate an abnormal triangle immediately under local paediatric protocol.