



## **Joint College of Family Physicians Singapore–Singapore Medical Association Advisory on Medical Examinations for Migrant Domestic Workers**

*[Issued on 28 August 2021]*

Following the introduction of the new changes to the Six-Monthly Medical Examination (6ME) for Migrant Domestic Workers (MDW) announced in the joint Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and Ministry of Health (MOH) Circular MH 69:07/7-1 dated 5 August 2021, CFPS and SMA would like to issue this advisory to provide guidance to medical practitioners who provide 6ME services as part of their practice. This advisory should be read in conjunction with Circular MH 69:07/7-1 as well as MOH Circular 91/2021 (Management of Cases Suspect of Abuse).

In the previous edition of the 6ME, there was a reminder to the medical practitioner that if he or she notices any signs of abuse, the MDW should be referred immediately to the Police or MOM for help. In the new edition of the 6ME, it has now become a requirement to screen for signs of suspicious and unexplained injuries. Other key changes include:

- Requirement to record the height, body weight and BMI of the MDW
- Mandatory online submission of all 6ME
- Need to examine the MDW without the presence of the employer or representative in the examination room.
- The assumption of deemed consent from the MDW to be examined for statutory examinations – a signature no longer needs to be obtained.

These new changes are designed to balance the requirements of an adequate examination to detect abuse, without making it more onerous and time consuming for doctors, while maintaining the dignity of the patient and the affordability of the service.

The following is a suggested workflow to cover the requirements in the new 6ME form.

<b>Registration by Clinic Assistant/ Receptionist</b>	
Steps	Remarks
Register the MDW by visual confirmation of the work permit and examination form.	
Measure and record the Height, Weight and BMI of the MDW.	Self-reporting by the MDW is not acceptable.
If the employer / representative accompanies the MDW to the clinic, it is a MOM requirement to advise that he/she will not be allowed to accompany the MDW into the consultation / examination room.	If there are concerns about language barriers, the examining doctor is advised to tap on translation applications (e.g. Google Translate) to facilitate the examination.

<b>Medical Examination</b>	
<b>Steps</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Verify the MDW's identity by visual confirmation of the work permit and examination form.	A photocopy or photograph of the work permit is acceptable in lieu of an original hard copy.
<u>Assessment for pregnancy</u> 1. Record last menstrual period and menstrual history.  2. Serum beta HCG (urine HCG may be used but has limitations)  3. Optional: Abdominal examination for gravid uterus – patient should be supine and abdomen exposed. Male doctors are advised to have a chaperone.	Further relevant sexual, menstrual and contraceptive history may be taken if in doubt. There is higher risk that the patient may be pregnant if seen within the first 6 months of arrival in Singapore or after home leave.  Serum beta HCG is recommended as the test of choice over urine beta HCG. Serum beta HCG has a better detection rate as compared to urine beta HCG, and will also reduce the need to collect a urine sample in the clinic and the need to verify authenticity of urine samples.  If an enlarged uterus is detected by abdominal palpation, further investigation by ultrasound scan or a gynaecological evaluation may be necessary.
<u>Examination for signs of abuse</u> 1. Quick history to check for abuse Suggested questions: “How is your employer treating you?” “Do you have enough food and rest?” “If you are being abused but don't want to tell me now, you can call MOM for help at 1800-339-5505.”  2. Calculate BMI Check for decreasing trend of BMI. (There will be a future enhancement in Q1 2022 that will show the BMI taken at other clinics previously.)  3. Visual check on exposed body parts, basic questioning and observation, exercise clinical judgement  ONLY where the doctor feels a more extensive check is warranted, obtain the MDW's permission, request the MDW to expose the appropriate part of the body and examine in presence of a chaperone.  If the MDW does not give permission, the doctor can record as observation and report to MOM.	If there are concerns about language barriers, the examining doctor is advised to tap on translation applications (e.g. Google Translate) to facilitate the examination.  <u>Note:</u> CFPS and SMA are working with MOM to provide translations to key questions. We will endeavour to include the translations in an updated version of this advisory.  Unexplained weight loss should lead to further conversations regarding possible abuse.  MOM does not require the MDW to undress for comprehensive physical examination. For the purpose of routine examination for signs of abuse, examination of covered body parts is not necessary. Degree of examination is a clinical judgement based on history and index of suspicion.  A non-exhaustive list of “high index of suspicion” examples: (a) *Unexplained weight loss* (b) *Unfavourable response to screening questions* (on whether the MDW has enough sleep, rest and whether the employer treats the MDW well etc.). (c) *Evasive, downcast, unkempt, appears exhausted, poor hygiene in appearance* (d) *The other features named in MOH Circular* (repeated injuries, bruises/injuries of varying ages over time, unusual patterned injuries). Presence of one injury should prompt a more detailed examination.

<b>Medical Examination</b>	
Steps	Remarks
<u>Other examination(s) as requested by MOM</u> VDRL  HIV  Chest X-ray	

<b>Post-Consultation</b>	
Steps	Remarks
<b>ABUSE SUSPECTED:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If you suspect the patient is in imminent danger – call the police on 999 immediately.</li> <li>▪ If non-urgent, but abuse is suspected, you still need to report it within 2 hours at <a href="http://go.gov.sg/spf-epc">go.gov.sg/spf-epc</a>.</li> <li>▪ If you are NOT sure, but would like to alert MOM to investigate, call MOM helpline for helpers 1800-339-5505.</li> </ul>	If a police report is deemed necessary, you should offer the patient to remain in the clinic to await arrival of the police.
<u>When reviewing the results of the 6ME</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do not pre-sign the form.</li> <li>▪ Form should be signed by the examining doctor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If VDRL positive, check VDRL titre and TPHA.</li> <li>▪ If uterus palpable but not due to pregnancy, exclude medical causes.</li> </ul>

<b>Submission of Report</b>	
Steps	Remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All completed reports must be submitted to MOM regardless of the outcome.</li> <li>▪ Submit at: <a href="http://go.gov.sg/submit-6me-clinic">go.gov.sg/submit-6me-clinic</a></li> <li>▪ There is no requirement to give the employer a copy of the form.</li> </ul>	Updates to submission system expected in Q1 2022.

**Note:** Please refer to the actual MOH and MOM circulars for more information.