

OPQRST(U) Course

OPQRSTU is an acronym medical professionals use to find reasons for the symptoms the patient is experiencing accurately. For example, we can use this to clear out the possible symptoms of a heart attack. This is usually taken during vitals and SAMPLE.

Note that SAMPLE collects the patient's history, meanwhile, OPQRST focuses on the symptoms themselves, mostly pain.

OPQRST stands for Onset, Provocation/Palliation, Quality, Region and Radiation, Severity, and Time. The last letter stands for Understanding, which basically means understanding what is causing the pain.

Down below you can see the questions you may ask from a patient to complete OPQRSTU.

Onset

(This is similar to E in SAMPLE so you may skip this if you want to)

Provocation/Palliation

In this, we are focusing on anything that worsens or relieves the pain.

When you press at that spot does the pain worsen?

Does movement cause more pain?

Does any position help with the pain?

Do the symptoms relieve in rest?

Quality of the pain.

In this section, we will be focusing on the pain itself, like what does it feel like.

Can you describe the pain to me?

Does the pain feel burning, pulsative, sharp, crushing, etc?

Is the pain constant or does it go away?

Region and Radiation

Now we will focus on where the pain is coming from and if it's radiating to somewhere else.

Where the pain is located?

Does the pain radiate somewhere else?

Does the pain “move” to other places?

Severity

Next, we will ask the patient how bad the pain is, you may use a scale from 0 to 10.

Can you rate the pain for me from 0 to 10?

Time

Lastly, we will ask how long has the pain/symptoms been going on and whether has it changed during that time.

How long has this been going on?

Have the symptoms worsened or relieved during the time?