



The Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) is the regulatory body for licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) in Nova Scotia. Our mandate is to protect the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing services by its registrants. The term nurse in this document refers to LPNs, RNs, and NPs unless otherwise stated.

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Our practice support tools are developed using current reference material. The source of this material is available upon request.



Overview of this Tool

As a newly graduated nurse you must recognize the importance of identifying what you do and do not know, what your learning gaps may be, and how and where to access available resources. A self-assessment process may be further enhanced by taking into consideration your employer expectations for your area of practice.

All nurses are expected to engage in informal reflective evaluation when providing nursing services within their specific context of practice and patient population. Competence evolves as nurses increase their professional capacity moving from novice to expert.

This tool is a resource for newly graduated LPNs and RNs in all practice settings to help them understand how to recognize and minimize risk.

Like all regulatory tools, use this document in conjunction with employer policy, applicable legislation and the standards of practice and code of ethics for LPNs and RNs.

Risk Assessment - Recognizing and Minimizing Risk in Practice

Nurses exercise professional knowledge and judgement to identify and minimize risks when engaging in nursing practice. Identifying practice as high risk does not mean you refrain from taking part in practice, but rather that you are aware of and identify ways to minimize that risk. Minimizing risk most importantly enhances client safety, but also improves your ability to consistently meet your standards of practice.

One strategy to recognize and minimize risk in practice is the Three-Factor Framework, which is an easy-to-use tool to help you determine risk. For more information, see the [Effective Utilization of RNs and LPNs Practice Guideline](#). The three factors are the client, the nurse and the environment.

RECOGNIZING RISK

Questions to ask yourself to identify if a certain practice is high risk:

The Client(s) Factor:

- Does the client have complex care needs?
- Are the health outcomes of the client predictable?
- Could there be a negative effect on client outcome(s) if:
 - the intervention/procedure is not implemented correctly?
 - the intervention/procedure does not occur?
- Are there multiple steps/interventions where potential errors could occur?
- Are the interventions complex?
- Is there potential for miscommunication of information to others involved?

MINIMIZING RISK

Questions to ask yourself before you engage in a high-risk practice:

The Nurse Factor:

- Is this practice within my professional scope of practice?
- Is this practice within my individual scope of practice?
- Do I have the required competencies in this practice?

- Have I had sufficient training in this practice?
- Do I have adequate experience in this practice?
- Can I manage all potential outcomes?
- What interventions can I put in place to minimize risk?

The Environment Factor:

- Is this practice within my scope of employment?
- Who and where are my resources and supports?
 - Are they available onsite or remotely?
- Are there employer resources available such as policies, procedures and guidelines to provide practice guidance?
- Do I have access to collaborating health care professionals?

Key Points to Remember

- All nurses are expected to engage in informal reflective evaluation when providing nursing services.
- Identifying practice as high risk does not mean you refrain from taking part in practice, but rather that you are aware and identify ways to minimize that risk.
- The Three-Factor Framework is an easy-to-use tool to help you determine risk.

Suggested Reading

- [Nursing Scope of Practice: Practice Guideline](#)

For further information on anything contained within this tool, please contact an NSCN Practice Consultant at practice@nscn.ca.