



Geriatric Medicine Blueprint

Certification Examination (CERT)

Purpose of the exam

The exam is designed to evaluate the knowledge, diagnostic reasoning, and clinical judgment skills expected of the certified geriatrician in the broad domain of the discipline. The ability to make appropriate diagnostic and management decisions that have important consequences for patients will be assessed. The exam may require recognition of common as well as rare clinical problems for which patients may consult a certified geriatrician. The exam is developed jointly by the ABIM and the American Board of Family Medicine.

Exam content

Exam content is determined by a pre-established blueprint, or table of specifications, which is reviewed annually and updated as needed for currency. Trainees, training program directors, and certified practitioners in the discipline are surveyed periodically to provide feedback and inform the blueprinting process.

The primary medical content categories of the blueprint are shown below, with the percentage assigned to each for a typical exam:

Medical Content Category	% of Exam
Gerontology	5%
Diseases in the Elderly	45%
Geriatric Psychiatry	8.5%
Geriatric Syndromes	22.5%
Functional Assessment and Rehabilitation	3%
Caring for Elderly Patients	16%
	100%

ABIM is committed to working toward health equity and believes that board-certified physicians should have an understanding of health care disparities. Therefore, health equity content that is clinically important to each discipline will be included in assessments, and the use of gender, race, and ethnicity identifiers will be re-evaluated.

Exam format

The exam is composed of up to 240 single-best-answer multiple-choice questions, of which approximately 40 are new questions that do not count in the examinee's score. Most questions describe patient scenarios and ask about the work done (that is, tasks performed) by physicians in the course of practice:

- Making a diagnosis
- Ordering and interpreting results of tests
- Recommending treatment or other patient care
- Assessing risk, determining prognosis, and applying principles from epidemiologic studies
- Understanding the underlying pathophysiology of disease and basic science knowledge applicable to patient care

Clinical information presented may include patient photographs, radiographs, electrocardiograms, recordings of heart sounds, video, and other media to illustrate relevant patient findings. [Learn more information on how exams are developed.](#)

A tutorial including examples of ABIM exam question format can be found at <http://www.abim.org/certification/exam-information/geriatric-medicine/exam-tutorial.aspx>.

The blueprint can be expanded for additional detail as shown below. Each of the medical content categories is listed there, and below each major category are the content subsections and specific topics that *may* appear in the exam. Please note: actual exam content may vary.

Gerontology	5% of Exam
Biology	<2%
Physiology	2%
General principles	
Normal physiologic changes with aging	
Clinical implications of age-related changes	
Demography and epidemiology	<2%
Age groups	
Living arrangements	
Disability	
Life expectancy	
Determinants of health and longevity	

Psychology and sociology of aging	<2%
Stressors and coping strategies	
Social network and social involvement	
Spirituality	
Sexuality	
Interpretation of literature in context of aging	<2%
Study design	
Biostatistics	
Bias	
Medication issues in the elderly not related to specific conditions	<2%
Pharmacokinetics	
Pharmacodynamics	

Diseases in the Elderly	45% of Exam
--------------------------------	--------------------

Allergy	<2%
Allergic rhinitis	
Ocular	
Drug allergy	
Other allergy topics	
Cardiovascular	6%
Rhythm disturbances	
Heart failure	
Valvular heart disease	
Cor pulmonale	
Pericardial diseases	
Atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease	
Hypertension	
Orthostatic hypotension	
Peripheral arterial disease	
Syncope	
Dermatology	2%
Infections	
Blistering diseases	
Pruritus	
Chronic venous insufficiency	

Endocrinology	4.5%
Diabetes mellitus	
Metabolic syndrome	
Adrenal disorders	
Thyroid disorders	
Osteoporosis	
Disorders of calcium metabolism	
Vitamin D	
Diabetes insipidus	
Osteopenia	
Pituitary	
Gastroenterology	2.5%
Esophageal disorders	
Stomach and duodenum disorders	
Liver disorders	
Biliary tract disorders	
Pancreas disorders	
Small intestine (jejunum and ileum) disorders	
Colon disorders	
Gastrointestinal bleeding disorders	
Genitourinary and gender-specific disorders	2%
Male genitourinary disorders	
Gynecologic disorders	
Transgender health issues	
Hematology and oncology	4%
Hematology	
Decreased blood cell counts	
Increased blood cell counts	
Coagulation disorders	
Thrombotic disorders	
Hematologic malignancies	
Complications of malignancy	
Infectious diseases	4%
Atypical presentations	
Fever of unknown origin	
Respiratory infections	
Genitourinary	
HIV and AIDS	

Intra-abdominal and gastrointestinal	
Neurologic	
Bones and joints	
Miscellaneous infections	
Lyme disease	
Infestations	
Bacteremia and sepsis	
Endocarditis	
Other bacteremia and sepsis topics	
Drug-resistant and infections	
Common antibiotic resistance	
Vancomycin-resistant <i>Enterococcus faecium</i> (VREF)	
Methicillin-resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> (MRSA)	
<i>Clostridioides (Clostridium) difficile</i>	
Extended-spectrum beta-lactamase-producing organisms	
Nephrology	2.5%
Hyponatremia	
Hypernatremia	
Acute kidney injury	
Chronic kidney disease	
Glomerular disorders	
Renovascular disease	
Tubulointerstitial nephritis	
Acid-base disorders	
Hypokalemia	
Hyperkalemia	
Neurology	5%
Cerebrovascular disease	
Seizures	
Neuromuscular disorders	
Headaches	
Myelopathies	
Traumatic brain injury	
Spinal cord injury	
Dysphagia	
Oral health	<2%
Dental caries	
Periodontal diseases	
Candidiasis	

Xerostomia	
Temporomandibular joint	
Leukoplakia	
Dentures	
Nutritional deficiencies and oral health	
Pulmonary disease	2.5%
Asthma and bronchospasm	
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)	
Interstitial lung diseases	
Pulmonary thromboembolism	
Pleural diseases	
Acute respiratory failure	
Occupational and environmental lung diseases	
Other pulmonary disease topics	
Rheumatology and musculoskeletal conditions	5.5%
Osteoarthritis	
Musculoskeletal conditions	
Bursitis and tendinitis	
Fibromyalgia	
Adhesive capsulitis (frozen shoulder syndrome)	
Acute disk herniation	
Vertebral compression fracture	
Hip fracture	
Lower extremity amputation	
Lumbar stenosis	
Cervical stenosis	
Carpal tunnel syndrome	
Fasciitis	
Deconditioning	
Other musculoskeletal condition topics (compartment syndrome)	
Crystal deposition disease	
Arteritis and vasculitis	
Rheumatoid arthritis	
Systemic lupus erythematosus	
Dermatomyositis and polymyositis	
Amyloidosis	
Systemic sclerosis	

Ears, nose, and throat (ENT)	<2%
Hearing loss	
Throat and laryngeal disorders (age-related vocal cord atrophy; submandibular mass; laryngopharyngeal reflux)	
Ophthalmology	<2%
Macular degeneration	
Glaucoma	

Geriatric Psychiatry	8.5% of Exam
-----------------------------	---------------------

Major depressive disorder	3%
Without psychotic features	
With psychotic features	
Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia)	<2%
Adjustment disorder	<2%
Bipolar disorder	<2%
Anxiety	<2%
Psychotic disorders	<2%
Substance use disorders	<2%
Other psychiatric disorders	<2%
Personality disorders	
Somatoform disorders	
Serotonin syndrome	
Neuroleptic malignant syndrome	
Suicide	<2%

Geriatric Syndromes	22.5% of Exam
----------------------------	----------------------

Cognitive impairment	6%
Mild cognitive impairment	
Dementia	6.5%
Alzheimer disease	
Dementia with Lewy bodies	
Frontotemporal dementia	
Vascular dementia	
Other types of dementia	
Other topics in dementia	
Behavioral disturbances	
Amnesic syndromes	
Other cognitive impairment topics	

Delirium	3%
Dizziness and light-headedness	<2%
Vertigo	
Non-vertigo	
Falls (non-syncopal)	3%
Incontinence	2%
Pressure ulcers	<2%
Sleep disorders	<2%
Undernutrition and involuntary weight loss	<2%
Obesity and overweight	<2%
Frailty	<2%
Elder mistreatment	<2%
Deconditioning	<2%
Appropriate prescribing	<2%

Functional Assessment and Rehabilitation	3% of Exam
---	-------------------

Assessment of disability	<2%
Assessment of rehabilitation potential	<2%
Aspects of rehabilitation	<2%
Interdisciplinary team	
Assistive devices	
Adaptive equipment	
Therapeutic modalities	
Orthotics	
Prosthetics	
Environmental modifications	
Rehabilitation settings	<2%

Caring for Elderly Patients	16% of Exam
------------------------------------	--------------------

Preventive medicine	4%
Immunizations	
Screening	
Lipid abnormalities	
Health behaviors and lifestyle issues	
Secondary prevention	
Hospital care	
Iatrogenic disorders	

Complementary, alternative, and integrative medicine	<2%
Economic aspects of health care	<2%
Health care delivery models	2%
Delivery models	
Community-based long-term care	
Institutional long-term care settings	
Hospital Care	
Transition in care	
End-of-life models	
Ethics	<2%
Ethical principles of care	
Case-based ethical dilemmas	
Decision making	<2%
Advance directives	
Surrogate decision making	
Decision-making capacity	
Caregiver and family concerns	<2%
Caregiver stress and burnout	
Inability to live alone	
Driving	
Management of finances	
Cultural aspects of aging	<2%
Use of medical interpreters	
Issues regarding patient preference	
Palliative care	5%
Pain and other symptom management	
States of reduced consciousness	
Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) outcomes	
Hospice benefit	
Goals of care	
Communication	

January 2025