13.1: Musculoskeletal Assessment Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Perform a musculoskeletal assessment
- Palpate joints for pain, swelling, change in temperature, and range of motion
- Modify assessment techniques to reflect variations across the life span
- Recognize and report significant deviations from norms
- Document actions and observations

The musculoskeletal system gives us the ability to move. It is composed of bones, muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments, and cartilage that support the body, allow movement, and protect vital organs. An assessment of the musculoskeletal system includes collecting data regarding the structure and movement of the body, as well the patient’s mobility. Let’s begin by reviewing the anatomy of the musculoskeletal system and common conditions a nurse may find on assessment.