

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CRITICAL-CARE NURSES (AACN) CERTIFICATION PRACTICE TEST (SAMPLE)

STUDY GUIDE



Prepare with structure. Pass with confidence



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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 – 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

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- 1. Which self-management task involves managing one's emotions?**
 - A. Medical management
 - B. Role management
 - C. Emotional management
 - D. Physical activity management
- 2. According to lipid guidelines, what LDL level is recommended for patients with moderate risk factors?**
 - A. Less than 100 mg/dL
 - B. Less than 130 mg/dL
 - C. Less than 70 mg/dL
 - D. Less than 120 mg/dL
- 3. What does preload refer to in cardiac physiology?**
 - A. The resistance against which the heart must work
 - B. The amount of stretch in the cardiac muscle at the end of diastole
 - C. The volume of blood returning to the heart
 - D. The speed of blood flow through the heart
- 4. What class of medication is used as a first-line treatment for acute coronary syndrome?**
 - A. Beta blockers
 - B. Nitrates
 - C. Calcium channel blockers
 - D. Sodium channel blockers
- 5. Which condition is characterized by slurred speech?**
 - A. Dysphagia
 - B. Dysarthria
 - C. Dysphonia
 - D. Dysmorphia

- 6. What lactate level indicates hyperlactatemia?**
- A. Less than 2 mmol/L
 - B. 2-4 mmol/L
 - C. More than 2 mmol/L
 - D. More than 4 mmol/L
- 7. What does the SOFA score predict in patients?**
- A. The length of hospital stay
 - B. Likely mortality in sepsis
 - C. A patient's nutritional needs
 - D. Health insurance coverage
- 8. What does a high systemic vascular resistance (SVR) indicate?**
- A. Low heart rate
 - B. Vasodilation of blood vessels
 - C. Vasoconstriction of blood vessels
 - D. Increased venous return
- 9. Which two tumor markers are used to monitor response to treatment and detect recurrence of testicular germ cell cancer?**
- A. Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) and carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA)
 - B. Beta-human chorionic gonadotropin (b-hCG) and alpha-fetoprotein (AFP)
 - C. Beta-human chorionic gonadotropin (b-hCG) and prostate-specific antigen (PSA)
 - D. Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) and serum lipase
- 10. What does oliguria indicate regarding urine output?**
- A. Increased urine output
 - B. Normal urine output
 - C. Decreased urine output
 - D. Variable urine output

Answers

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1. C
2. A
3. B
4. B
5. B
6. C
7. B
8. C
9. B
10. C

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Explanations

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1. Which self-management task involves managing one's emotions?

- A. Medical management
- B. Role management
- C. Emotional management**
- D. Physical activity management

The self-management task that involves managing one's emotions is emotional management. This aspect of self-management focuses specifically on recognizing, understanding, and effectively handling emotions in various situations. It is essential for maintaining mental health and well-being, especially in challenging environments such as healthcare or chronic illness management. Emotional management includes practices like stress reduction techniques, coping strategies for difficult emotions, and fostering a positive outlook despite setbacks. This self-management task is crucial because emotions can significantly influence decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and overall health outcomes. In contrast, the other options address different facets of self-management. Medical management pertains to overseeing medication regimens and treatment plans. Role management involves balancing different life roles and responsibilities. Physical activity management focuses on maintaining and incorporating exercise into daily routines. While all these aspects are vital for comprehensive self-management, emotional management specifically targets the regulation and understanding of one's feelings, making it the most accurate choice in relation to the question.

2. According to lipid guidelines, what LDL level is recommended for patients with moderate risk factors?

- A. Less than 100 mg/dL**
- B. Less than 130 mg/dL
- C. Less than 70 mg/dL
- D. Less than 120 mg/dL

The recommended LDL level for patients with moderate risk factors is less than 100 mg/dL. This guideline is based on the understanding that patients with moderate risk for cardiovascular disease benefit from maintaining lower levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL), which is often referred to as "bad" cholesterol due to its association with plaque buildup in arteries. Keeping LDL levels below this threshold helps mitigate the risk of heart disease and other cardiovascular complications. This guideline reflects an evolving understanding of cholesterol management and the need for preventive measures in patients who may not have the highest risk but still possess relevant moderate risk factors. Maintaining LDL levels below 100 mg/dL signifies active management of cholesterol through lifestyle modifications, dietary changes, and potentially medication when necessary, all aimed at reducing cardiovascular risk.

3. What does preload refer to in cardiac physiology?

- A. The resistance against which the heart must work
- B. The amount of stretch in the cardiac muscle at the end of diastole**
- C. The volume of blood returning to the heart
- D. The speed of blood flow through the heart

In cardiac physiology, preload specifically refers to the amount of stretch in the cardiac muscle fibers at the end of diastole, which occurs just before the heart contracts. This stretch is a direct result of the volume of blood that fills the ventricles during diastole. When the ventricles are filled with more blood, the myocardial fibers are stretched further, which enhances the force of the subsequent contraction due to the Frank-Starling mechanism. Understanding preload is essential for assessing cardiac function, especially in clinical settings. An optimal preload can improve cardiac output, while excessive preload may lead to heart failure or other complications. The direct relationship between ventricular filling and the resultant stroke volume is a fundamental concept in managing various cardiac conditions. The other concepts mentioned, while related to cardiac function, do not accurately define preload. The resistance against which the heart must work is known as afterload, and the speed of blood flow does not influence the concept of preload directly. Although the volume of blood returning to the heart influences preload, it is the resultant stretch of the cardiac muscle at the end of diastole that is the defining characteristic of preload.

4. What class of medication is used as a first-line treatment for acute coronary syndrome?

- A. Beta blockers
- B. Nitrates**
- C. Calcium channel blockers
- D. Sodium channel blockers

Nitrates are commonly used as a first-line treatment for acute coronary syndrome (ACS) because they effectively relieve chest pain and improve oxygen delivery to the heart. Nitrates achieve this by causing vasodilation, which reduces myocardial oxygen demand and alleviates the strain on the heart. This property makes nitrates particularly beneficial in the management of angina and acute myocardial infarction, where rapid relief of ischemia is critical. While other medication classes such as beta blockers and calcium channel blockers play important roles in the management of heart conditions, they are typically used in later stages of treatment or for different indications. Beta blockers decrease heart rate and myocardial oxygen demand but are usually introduced after the acute phase has stabilized. Calcium channel blockers can also contribute to blood pressure reduction and angina relief, but they are generally not the first line in ACS management. Sodium channel blockers are not standard treatments for acute coronary syndrome. Therefore, nitrates stand out as the preferred initial therapeutic option due to their rapid action and efficacy in relieving symptoms associated with acute coronary syndromes.

5. Which condition is characterized by slurred speech?

- A. Dysphagia
- B. Dysarthria**
- C. Dysphonia
- D. Dysmorphia

Dysarthria is a motor speech disorder resulting from neurological injury, which leads to difficulties in articulating words. It is characterized by slurred or slowed speech that can be difficult to understand. This condition occurs due to weakness in the muscles involved in speaking, which can result from various conditions such as stroke, brain injury, or neurological diseases. In contrast, dysphagia refers to difficulty in swallowing, dysphonia involves trouble with voice production, often affecting volume or quality, and dysmorphia typically relates to a distorted body image or appearance. Each of these terms addresses different aspects of communication and physical capability, making dysarthria specifically the correct choice in relation to slurred speech.

6. What lactate level indicates hyperlactatemia?

- A. Less than 2 mmol/L
- B. 2-4 mmol/L
- C. More than 2 mmol/L**
- D. More than 4 mmol/L

Hyperlactatemia is defined as an elevated level of lactate in the blood, which can indicate anaerobic metabolism or tissue hypoxia. The threshold for defining hyperlactatemia is typically set at greater than 2 mmol/L. Lactate levels between 2-4 mmol/L signify mild to moderate cases of hyperlactatemia, often associated with conditions that induce increased lactate production. Levels above 4 mmol/L indicate a more severe form of elevated lactate, often associated with significant metabolic stress or shock. Thus, identifying a lactate level of more than 2 mmol/L as hyperlactatemia allows healthcare professionals to recognize when interventions may be necessary to address potential underlying conditions affecting oxygen delivery and utilization in the body. This helps in timely management and improving patient outcomes in critically ill patients.

7. What does the SOFA score predict in patients?

- A. The length of hospital stay
- B. Likely mortality in sepsis**
- C. A patient's nutritional needs
- D. Health insurance coverage

The SOFA score, which stands for Sequential Organ Failure Assessment, is primarily used to evaluate organ dysfunction and to predict the likelihood of mortality in patients, particularly those with sepsis. This scoring system assesses the function of six organ systems: respiratory, cardiovascular, hepatic, coagulation, renal, and neurological. By assigning points based on the level of dysfunction, healthcare providers can gain insight into the severity of a patient's condition and their risk for mortality. When it comes to managing patients with sepsis, understanding the potential mortality risk is crucial for making informed decisions regarding treatment plans and interventions. The higher the SOFA score, the more severe the organ dysfunction, and consequently, the greater the likelihood of increased mortality. Therefore, the SOFA score is an essential tool in critical care settings, allowing healthcare professionals to identify severely ill patients and the urgency of medical intervention needed. The other options, while related to clinical practice, do not align with the primary function of the SOFA score. The score does not provide any specific information about the length of hospital stays, a patient's nutritional needs, or health insurance coverage. Its core purpose remains firmly centered on assessing organ failure and predicting mortality, particularly in septic patients.

8. What does a high systemic vascular resistance (SVR) indicate?

- A. Low heart rate
- B. Vasodilation of blood vessels
- C. Vasoconstriction of blood vessels**
- D. Increased venous return

A high systemic vascular resistance (SVR) typically indicates vasoconstriction of blood vessels. When the vascular resistance is elevated, it means that the blood vessels are constricted, which leads to increased resistance against the flow of blood. This results in the heart having to work harder to pump blood through these narrowed pathways. Vasoconstriction often occurs in response to various physiological demands such as increased blood pressure needs, reduced blood flow to certain areas, or as part of the body's response to stress. In contrast, scenarios involving low SVR usually relate to vasodilation, where blood vessels widen, reducing resistance and facilitating easier blood flow. Understanding SVR is crucial for clinicians as it provides insights into cardiovascular health and can guide treatment plans for conditions associated with abnormal vascular resistance.

9. Which two tumor markers are used to monitor response to treatment and detect recurrence of testicular germ cell cancer?

- A. Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) and carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA)
- B. Beta-human chorionic gonadotropin (b-hCG) and alpha-fetoprotein (AFP)**
- C. Beta-human chorionic gonadotropin (b-hCG) and prostate-specific antigen (PSA)
- D. Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) and serum lipase

Beta-human chorionic gonadotropin (b-hCG) and alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) are crucial tumor markers specifically used in the management of testicular germ cell cancer. These markers play significant roles in both monitoring treatment responses and detecting potential recurrences of the disease. Alpha-fetoprotein is a protein that is typically produced by the fetal liver, but its levels are elevated in certain testicular cancers, particularly non-seminomas. Monitoring AFP levels can provide valuable information about the presence of disease and its response to therapy. Beta-human chorionic gonadotropin, similarly, is a hormone that can be produced by testicular tumors. Elevated b-hCG levels are particularly associated with germ cell tumors and are also used to assess treatment efficacy. In clinical practice, measuring changes in the levels of these two markers during and after therapy can help healthcare providers evaluate how well the treatment is working and to detect any signs of recurrence early. Other options such as carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) and prostate-specific antigen (PSA) are more relevant for different types of cancers and are not standard markers in the context of testicular germ cell cancer. Therefore, the combination of b-hCG and AFP provides the most accurate and relevant

10. What does oliguria indicate regarding urine output?

- A. Increased urine output
- B. Normal urine output
- C. Decreased urine output**
- D. Variable urine output

Oliguria refers to a condition where there is a reduction in urine output, typically classified as urine output that is less than 400 milliliters per day in adults. This decreased urine output can serve as an important clinical sign, indicating possible underlying issues such as dehydration, renal impairment, or other systemic conditions affecting kidney function. Monitoring oliguria is critical for assessing a patient's fluid balance, kidney health, and potential progression to more severe conditions like acute kidney injury. Understanding this term is essential for healthcare professionals in evaluating patients and making appropriate treatment decisions.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://aacn.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!

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