For clients with known or suspected problems of this system, urinary assessment requires the techniques of inspection, palpation, percussion, and auscultation. Auscultate immediately after inspection because percussion or palpation may increase bowel motility and interfere with sound transmission during auscultation.

The equipment necessary to assess the urinary system is a urine specimen cup and disposable gloves. At the beginning of the assessment, the client may be sitting or lying supine. Prior to the examination, collect all necessary equipment and explain the techniques to the client to decrease anxiety.

Before beginning the assessment, ask the client to provide you with a clean-catch urine specimen and give the client a specimen cup. Assess the specimen for color, odor, and clarity before you send it to the laboratory.

Because the examination involves exposure of the genital area, give the client a gown and drape the client appropriately to minimize exposure.

Guidelines for percussion and palpation of the kidneys are outlined in the Box 25–1.

**PERCUSSION OF THE KIDNEYS**

Percussion of the kidneys helps assess pain or tenderness. Assist the client to a sitting position, and stand behind the client. For indirect percussion, place the palm of your nondominant hand over the costovertebral angle (see Figure A). Strike this area with the ulnar surface of your dominant hand, curled into a fist (see Figure B). For direct percussion, also strike the area over the costovertebral angle with the ulnar surface of your dominant hand, curled into a fist. Repeat the technique for the other kidney.

You should do percussion of the kidneys with only enough force so the client feels a gentle thud. Percussion is usually done at the end of the assessment.

**PALPATION OF THE KIDNEYS**

Although the technique of palpation of the kidneys is outlined here, this technique is best performed by an advanced practitioner, because it involves deep palpation. In addition, the kidneys are difficult to palpate.

Assist the client to the supine position and stand at the right side of the client. To palpate the left kidney, reach across the client and place your left hand under the client’s left flank with your palm upward. Elevate the left flank with your fingers, displacing the kidney upward. Ask the client to take a deep breath and use the palmer surface of your right hand to palpate the kidney (see Figure C). Repeat the technique for the right kidney.