

a concern to parents and may influence the parents' perception of the infant's attractiveness and their responsiveness to the infant. Positioning the infant on a waterbed or gel mattress can reduce or minimize cranial molding.

Neurologic impairment (e.g., intraventricular hemorrhage) and serious sequelae correlate with the size and gestational age of infants at birth and with the severity of neonatal complications. The greater the degree of immaturity, the greater the degree of potential disability. A greater incidence of cerebral palsy, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), visual-motor deficits, and altered intellectual functioning is observed in preterm than in full-term infants. However, behavioral development can be enhanced when families are provided with support and infants are referred to appropriate services for neurologic and developmental interventions. Parental interest and involvement are important variables in the developmental progress of infants.

## **Therapeutic Management**

When delivery of a preterm infant is anticipated, the intensive care nursery is alerted and a team approach implemented. Ideally, a neonatologist, an advanced practice nurse, a staff nurse, and a respiratory therapist are present for the delivery. Infants who do not require resuscitation are immediately transferred in a heated incubator to the NICU, where they are weighed and where IV lines, oxygen therapy, and other therapeutic interventions are initiated as needed. Resuscitation is conducted in the delivery area until infants can be safely transported to the NICU.

Subsequent care is determined by the infant's status. The general care of preterm infants differs from that of full-term infants primarily in the areas of respiratory support, temperature regulation, nutrition, susceptibility to infection, activity intolerance, neurodevelopmental care, and other consequences of physical immaturity.

## **Nursing Care Management**

The nursing care, similar to the therapeutic management, is individualized for each infant. See appropriate discussions in the [Nursing Care of the High-Risk Newborn and Family](#) section for