

- Do there seem to be periods of deep and light sleep?
- When awake, does the infant seem satisfied after a feeding?
- What stimuli elicit responses from the infant?
- When disturbed, how much does the infant protest?

## Skin

The texture of the newborn's skin is velvety smooth and puffy, especially about the eyes, the legs, the dorsal aspect of the hands and the feet, and the scrotum or labia. Skin color depends on racial and familial background and varies greatly among newborns. In general, white infants are usually pink to red. African-American newborns may appear a pinkish or yellowish brown. Infants of Hispanic descent may have an olive tint or a slight yellow cast to the skin. Infants of Asian descent may be a rosy or yellowish tan. The color of American Indian newborns varies from a light pink to a dark, reddish brown. By the second or third day of life, the skin turns to its more natural tone and is drier and flakier. Several other color changes that may be noted on the skin are described later in this chapter (see [Table 7-4](#)).

At birth, the skin may be partially covered with a grayish white, cheeselike substance called **vernix caseosa**, a mixture of sebum and desquamating cells. It is absorbed by 24 to 28 hours. A fine, downy hair called **lanugo** may be present on the skin, especially on the forehead, cheeks, shoulders, and back.

## Head

General observation of the contour of the head is important because molding occurs in almost all vaginal deliveries. In a vertex delivery, the head is usually flattened at the forehead, with the apex rising and forming a point at the end of the parietal bones and the posterior skull or occiput dropping abruptly. The usual, more oval contour of the head is apparent by 1 to 2 days after birth. The change in shape occurs because the bones of the cranium are not fused, allowing for overlapping of the edges of these bones to accommodate to the size of the birth canal during delivery. Such molding usually does not occur in infants born by elective cesarean section.

Six bones—the frontal, occipital, two parietals, and two