

darkness after months of intrauterine existence and benefits a great deal from auditory and tactile stimulation (see [Family-Centered Care](#) box).

Family-Centered Care

Phototherapy and Parent–Infant Interaction

The traditional use of phototherapy has evoked concerns regarding a number of psychobehavioral issues, including parent–infant separation, potential social isolation, decreased sensorineural stimulation, altered biologic rhythms, altered feeding patterns, and activity changes. Parental anxiety is greatly increased, particularly at the sight of their newborn blindfolded and under special lights. The interruption of breastfeeding for phototherapy is a potential deterrent to successful mother–infant attachment and interaction. Because research has demonstrated that bilirubin catabolism occurs primarily within the first few hours of the initiation of phototherapy, there is increased support for the periodic removal of the infant from treatment for feeding and holding. The benefits of stopping phototherapy for parental feeding and holding outweigh concerns related to the clearance of bilirubin in healthy full-term newborns with mild hyperbilirubinemia. Home phototherapy offers an additional opportunity to foster parent–infant attachment.

The initiation of any treatment requires **informed consent** by the parents for the therapy prescribed; however, in the case of phototherapy, considerable anxiety may rightfully occur when words such as *kernicterus* and *neurologic damage* are used to describe possible effects of nontreatment. It is imperative that nurses remain sensitive to parents' feelings and information needs during this process; an important nursing intervention is assessment of the parents' understanding of the treatment involved and clarification of the nature of the therapy.

An important nursing intervention is recognition of breastfeeding jaundice. Lack of familiarity among health professionals has caused many newborns prolonged hospitalization, termination of breastfeeding, and unnecessary phototherapy. Care of the new