

Vaginal discharge may be noted during the first week of life. This pseudomenstruation is a manifestation of the abrupt decrease of maternal hormones and usually disappears by 2 to 4 weeks of age. Fecal discharge from the vaginal opening indicates a rectovaginal fistula and is always reported. Vernix caseosa may be present in large amounts between the labia; it will disappear after several days with routine bathing and care.

Male Genitalia

The penis is inspected for the urethral opening, which is located at the tip. However, the opening may be totally covered by the **prepuce**, or foreskin, which covers the glans penis. A tight prepuce is a common finding in newborns. It should not be forcefully retracted; locating the urinary meatus is usually possible without retracting the foreskin. **Smegma**, a white cheesy substance, is commonly found around the glans penis under the foreskin. Small, white, firm lesions called *epithelial pearls* may be seen at the tip of the prepuce. An erection is common in newborns.

The scrotum may be large, edematous, and pendulous in full-term neonates, especially in infants born in breech position. It is more deeply pigmented in dark-skinned infants. A noncommunicating hydrocele commonly occurs unilaterally and disappears within a few months. Always palpate the scrotum for the presence of testes (see [Chapter 4](#)). In small newborns, particularly preterm infants, the undescended testes may be palpable within the inguinal canal. Absence of the testes may also be a sign of ambiguous genitalia (disorders of sex development), especially when accompanied by a small scrotum and penis. Inguinal hernias may or may not be manifested immediately after birth. A hernia is more easily detected when the infant is crying. Palpable lymph nodes are most commonly found in the inguinal area.

Back and Rectum

Inspect the spine with the infant prone. The shape of the spine is gently rounded, with none of the characteristic S-shaped curves seen later in life. Any abnormal openings, masses, dimples, or soft areas are noted. A protruding sac anywhere along the spine, but most commonly in the sacral area, indicates some type of spina