

Development

Health promotion integrates surveillance of the physical, psychological, and emotional changes that occur in human beings between birth and the end of adolescence. Developmental processes are unique to each stage of development, and continuous screening and assessment are essential for early intervention when problems are found. The most dramatic time of physical, motor, cognitive, emotional, and social development occurs during infancy.

Interactions between the parent and infant are central to promoting optimal developmental outcomes and are a key component of infant assessment. During early childhood, early identification of developmental delays is critical for establishing early interventions. Anticipatory guidance strategies ensure that parents are aware of the specific developmental needs of each developmental stage. Ongoing surveillance during middle childhood provides opportunities to strengthen cognitive and emotional attributes, communication skills, self-esteem, and independence. Recognition that adolescents differ greatly in their physical, social, and emotional maturity is important for surveillance throughout this developmental period.

Nutrition

Nutrition is an essential component for healthy growth and development. Human milk is the preferred form of nutrition for all infants. Breastfeeding provides the infant with micronutrients, immunologic properties, and several enzymes that enhance digestion and absorption of these nutrients. A recent resurgence in breastfeeding has occurred due to the education of mothers and fathers regarding its benefits and increased social support.

Children establish lifelong eating habits during the first 3 years of life, and the nurse is instrumental in educating parents on the importance of nutrition. Most eating preferences and attitudes related to food are established by family influences and culture. During adolescence, parental influence diminishes and the adolescent makes food choices related to peer acceptability and sociability. Occasionally these choices are detrimental to adolescents with chronic illnesses like diabetes, obesity, chronic lung disease, hypertension, cardiovascular risk factors, and renal