

implications for developing infants and toddlers. The nurse plays a primary role in identifying children at risk and helping to plan, implement, and evaluate developmental intervention (see [Chapters 9 and 11](#)).

School is an integral part of the school-age child's and adolescent's development. Accreditation standards for hospitals serving children consider access to appropriate educational services a key factor in the accreditation decision process when a child's treatment requires a significant absence from school ([The Joint Commission, 2011](#)). The nurse can encourage children to resume schoolwork as quickly as their condition permits, help them schedule and protect a selected time for studies, and help the family coordinate hospital educational services with their children's schools. Children should have the opportunity to continue art and music classes, as well as their academic subjects.

To meet the unique developmental needs of adolescents, special units may be developed that provide privacy, increased socialization, and appropriate activities for these young people. Typically, these units can be set apart from the general pediatric facility so that the teenagers do not share space with younger children, who are often perceived as a threat to their maturity.

In caring for adolescent patients, it is essential to provide flexible routines and activities, such as more group activity, wearing of street clothes, and access to the items so critical to adolescents—wireless technology devices, MP3 players, DVD players, computers, email, electronic video game systems, and high-definition televisions. Because adolescents' food habits are rarely limited to the three traditional meals a day, a ready supply of snacks should be available. However, the most important benefit of these units is increased socialization with peers. In addition, staff members usually enjoy working with this age group and are able to establish the trust that is so essential for communication.

Nursing Tip

When adolescents must share a common activity room with younger patients, referring to the area as the “activity room” rather than the “playroom” may entice them to visit the room and participate in activities.