

they can support one another emotionally. Parents appreciate receiving reading material about the syndrome\* and being referred to parent groups and/or professional counseling.

Parental responses to the child may greatly influence decisions regarding future care. Whereas some families willingly take the child home, others consider foster care or adoption. The nurse must answer questions regarding developmental potential carefully, because the responses may influence the parents' decision. The nurse should share the available informative sources (such as parent groups, professional counseling, and literature) to help the family learn about Down syndrome (see [Critical Thinking Case Study](#) box).

## Critical Thinking Case Study

### Diagnosis of Down Syndrome

The parents of Melissa, a newborn diagnosed as having Down syndrome, ask the nurse, “What are we supposed to do with her?” They further state that they already have three other children at home.

#### Questions

1. What evidence should you consider regarding this condition?
2. What additional information is required at this time?
3. List the nursing intervention(s) that have the highest priority.
4. Identify important patient-centered outcomes with reference to your nursing interventions.

## Assist the Family in Preventing Physical Problems

Many of the physical characteristics of infants with Down syndrome present challenges and nursing problems. The hypotonicity of muscles and hyperextensibility of joints complicate positioning. The limp, flaccid extremities resemble the posture of a rag doll; as a result, holding the infant is difficult and cumbersome. Sometimes parents perceive this lack of molding to their bodies as