

toe direction. The main function of such a systematic approach is to provide a general guideline for assessment of each body area to avoid omitting segments of the examination. The standard recording of data also facilitates exchange of information among different professionals. In examining children, this orderly sequence is frequently altered to accommodate the child's developmental needs, although the examination is recorded following the head-to-toe model. Using developmental and chronologic age as the main criteria for assessing each body system accomplishes several goals:

- Minimizes stress and anxiety associated with assessment of various body parts
- Fosters a trusting nurse–child–parent relationship
- Allows for maximum preparation of the child
- Preserves the essential security of the parent–child relationship, especially with young children
- Maximizes the accuracy and reliability of assessment findings

Preparation of the Child

Although the physical examination consists of painless procedures, for some children the use of a tight arm cuff, probes in the ears and mouth, pressure on the abdomen, and a cold piece of metal to listen to the chest are stressful. Therefore the nurse should use the same considerations discussed in [Chapter 20](#) for preparing children for procedures. In addition to that discussion, general guidelines related to the examining process are given in the Nursing Care Guidelines box.

Nursing Care Guidelines

Performing Pediatric Physical Examination

Perform the examination in an appropriate, nonthreatening area:

- Have room well-lit and decorated with neutral colors.
- Have room temperature comfortably warm.