

involves emptying the bowels with repeated saline enemas and decreasing bacterial flora with oral or systemic antibiotics and colonic irrigations using antibiotic solution. Enterocolitis is the most serious complication of Hirschsprung disease. Emergency preoperative care includes frequent monitoring of vital signs and blood pressure for signs of shock; monitoring fluid and electrolyte replacements, as well as plasma or other blood derivatives; and observing for symptoms of bowel perforation, such as fever, increasing abdominal distention, vomiting, increased tenderness, irritability, dyspnea, and cyanosis.

Because progressive distention of the abdomen is a serious sign, the nurse measures abdominal circumference with a paper tape measure, usually at the level of the umbilicus or at the widest part of the abdomen. The point of measurement is marked with a pen to ensure reliability of subsequent measurements. Abdominal measurement can be obtained with the vital sign measurements and is recorded in serial order so that any change is obvious. To reduce stress to the acutely ill child when frequent measurements of abdominal circumference are needed, the tape measure can be left in place beneath the child rather than removed each time.

Postoperative care.

Postoperative care is the same as that for any child or infant with abdominal surgery (see [Surgical Procedures, Chapter 20](#)). The nurse involves the parents in the care of the child, allowing them to help with feedings and observe for signs of wound infection or irregular passage of stool. Some children will require daily anal dilatations in the postoperative period to avoid anastomotic strictures; parents are often taught to perform the procedure in the home ([Temple, Shawyer, and Langer, 2012](#)). Although less common, a diverting colostomy may be performed in some children with Hirschsprung disease. Parents are taught how to care for the colostomy and how to provide skin care to prevent skin breakdown.

Vomiting

Vomiting is the forceful ejection of gastric contents through the mouth. It is a well-defined, complex, coordinated process that is under CNS control and is often accompanied by nausea and retching. Vomiting has many causes including acute infectious