

behavioral, unobtrusive method of measuring distress in unconscious and ventilated infants, children, and adolescents. This scale has eight indicators: alertness, calmness/agitation, respiratory response, physical movement, blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tone, and facial tension. Each indicator is scored between 1 and 5 based on the behaviors exhibited by the patient. The provider observes the patient unobtrusively for 2 minutes and derives the total score by adding the scores of each indicator. The total scores can range between 8 and 40. A score of 17 to 26 generally indicates adequate sedation and pain control. The COMFORT behavior (COMFORT-B) scale is able to detect specific changes in pain or distress intensity in critically-ill children and in young children with burns (Boerlage, Ista, Duivenvoorden, et al, 2015; de Jong, Tuinebreijer, Bremer, et al, 2012). The COMFORT scale performed best when compared to the CHIPPS, CRIESS, and PIPP in assessing behavioral and physiologic components of pain in newborns following cardiac surgery (Franck, Ridout, Howard, et al, 2011).

Self-Report Pain Rating Scales

Self-report measures are most often used for children older than 4 years old (Table 5-2). There are many different “faces” scales for the measurement of pain intensity. Although children at 4 or 5 years old are able to use self-report measures, cognitive characteristics of the preoperational stage influence their ability to separate feelings of pain and mood. Smiling faces on pain assessment scales can result in inadequacies of the pain rating (Quinn, Sheldon, and Cooley, 2014). Simple, concrete anchor words, such as “no hurt” to “biggest hurt,” are more appropriate than “least pain sensation to worst intense pain imaginable.” The ability to discriminate degrees of pain in facial expressions appears to be reasonably established by 3 years old (see Table 5-2). Faces scales provide a series of facial expressions depicting gradations of pain. The faces are appealing because children can simply point to the face that represents how they feel.

TABLE 5-2
Pain Rating Scales for Children

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