

Clinical Manifestations of Failure to Thrive

- Growth failure (see earlier in chapter for definitions)
- Developmental delays—social, motor, adaptive, language
- Undernutrition
- Apathy
- Withdrawn behavior
- Feeding or eating disorders, such as vomiting, feeding resistance, anorexia, pica, rumination
- No fear of strangers (at age when stranger anxiety is normal)
- Avoidance of eye contact
- Wide-eyed gaze and continual scan of the environment (“radar gaze”)
- Stiff and unyielding or flaccid and unresponsive
- Minimal smiling

Some parents are at increased risk for attachment problems because of isolation and social crisis; inadequate support systems, such as teenage and single mothers; and poor parenting role models as a child. Other factors that should be considered are lack of education; physical and mental health problems, such as physical and sexual abuse, depression, or drug dependence; immaturity, especially in adolescent parents; and lack of commitment to parenting, such as giving priority to entertainment or employment. Often these parents and their families are under stress and in multiple chronic emotional, social, and financial crises.

Because part of the difficulty between parent and child is dissatisfaction and frustration, the child should have a primary care nurse (Fig. 10-1). The nurses caring for the child can learn to perceive the child's cues and reverse the cycle of dissatisfaction,