

mobility. Even speech and language skills require sensorimotor activity and experience. For toddlers, exploration and imitative behaviors are essential to developing a sense of autonomy. Preschoolers' expression of initiative is evidenced by the need for vigorous physical activity. School-age children's development is strongly influenced by physical achievement and competition. Adolescents rely on mobility to achieve independence.

The monotony of immobilization may lead to sluggish intellectual and psychomotor responses; decreased communication skills; increased fantasizing; and rarely, hallucinations and disorientation. Children are likely to become depressed over loss of ability to function or the marked changes in body image. Physical interference with the activity of infants and young children gives them a feeling of helplessness. They may regress to earlier developmental behaviors, such as wanting to be fed, bedwetting, and baby talk.

Children may react to immobility by active protest, anger, and aggressive behavior, or they may become quiet, passive, and submissive. They may believe the immobilization is a justified punishment for misbehavior. Children should be allowed to display their anger, but it should be within the limits of safety to their self-esteem and not damaging to the integrity of others (see *Providing Opportunities for Play and Expressive Activities*, [Chapter 19](#)). When children are unable to express anger, aggression is often displayed inappropriately through regressive behavior and outbursts of crying or temper tantrums.

Effect on Families

Even brief periods of immobilization may disrupt family function, and catastrophic illness or disability may severely tax a family's resources and coping abilities. The family's needs often must be met by the services of a multidisciplinary team, and nurses play a key role in anticipating the services that they will need and in coordinating conferences to plan care. Home management is frequently planned prior to discharge, including special considerations for addressing cultural, economic, physical, and psychological needs. A child with a severe disability is very dependent, and caregivers need respite to revitalize themselves. Individual and group counseling is beneficial for solving problems