

minutes before determining that bowel sounds are absent. Stimulate bowel sounds by stroking the abdominal surface with a fingernail. Report absence of bowel sounds or hyperperistalsis, because either usually denotes an abdominal disorder.

## Palpation

There are two types of palpation: superficial and deep. For **superficial palpation**, lightly place your hand against the skin and feel each quadrant, noting any areas of tenderness, muscle tone, and superficial lesions, such as cysts. Because superficial palpation is often perceived as tickling, use several techniques to minimize this sensation and relax the child (see [Atraumatic Care](#) box). Admonishing the child to stop laughing only draws attention to the sensation and decreases cooperation.

## Atraumatic Care

### Promoting Relaxation during Abdominal Palpation

- Position child comfortably, such as in a semireclining position in the parent's lap, with knees flexed.
- Warm your hands before touching the skin.
- Use distraction, such as telling stories or talking to child.
- Teach child to use deep breathing and to concentrate on an object.
- Give infant a bottle or pacifier.
- Begin with light, superficial palpation and gradually progress to deeper palpation.
- Palpate any tender or painful areas last.
- Have child hold the parent's hand and squeeze it if palpation is uncomfortable.
- Use the nonpalpating hand to comfort the child, such as placing the free hand on child's shoulder while palpating abdomen.