

Encourage Socialization

Acquiring social skills is a complex task, as is learning self-care procedures. Active rehearsals with role-playing and practice sessions and positive reinforcement for desired behavior have been the most successful approaches. Parents should be encouraged early to teach their child socially acceptable behavior: waving goodbye, saying “hello” and “thank you,” responding to his or her name, greeting visitors, and sitting modestly. The teaching of socially acceptable sexual behavior is especially important to minimize sexual exploitation. Parents also need to expose the child to strangers so that he or she can practice manners, because there is no automatic transfer of learning from one situation to another.

Dressing and grooming are also important aspects of self-esteem and social acceptance. Clothes should be clean, age-appropriate, and well fitted with self-adhering fasteners and elastic openings to facilitate self-dressing.

Opportunities for social interaction and infant stimulation programs should began at an early age. As soon as possible, parents should enroll their child in early intervention or other appropriate preschool programs. Not only do these programs provide education and training, but they also offer an opportunity for social interaction with other children and adults. As children grow older, they should have peer experiences similar to those of other children, including group outings, sports, and organized activities, such as scouts and Special Olympics. Nurses should assess the child's abilities and encourage others (e.g., parents, teachers) to promote developmentally appropriate peer interaction, such as classroom and school activities, dance classes, clubs, vacations and family outings ([Bull and Committee on Genetics, 2011](#); [National Down Syndrome Society, 2012b](#); [Shapiro and Batshaw, 2011](#)).

Provide Information on Sexuality

Adolescence may be a particularly difficult time for parents, especially in terms of the child's sexual behavior, possibility of pregnancy, future plans to marry, and ability to be independent. Frequently, minimal anticipatory guidance has been offered parents to prepare the child for physical and sexual maturation. The nurse should help in this area by providing parents with information