



FIG 7-10 Bath time is an excellent opportunity for parents to learn about their newborn.

Parents are encouraged to examine their infant closely during bathing. Frequently, normal variations (such as, Epstein pearls, mongolian spots, or “stork bites”) cause parents much distress if they are unaware of the significance of such findings. Minor birth injuries may appear as major defects to them. Explaining how these occurred and when they will disappear reassures parents of their infant's normalcy. Common variations are discussed further in [Chapter 8](#).

One of the most important considerations in skin cleansing is preservation of the skin's **acid mantle**, which is formed from the uppermost horny layer of the epidermis; sweat; superficial fat; metabolic products; and external substances, such as amniotic fluid, microorganisms, and chemicals. Infants' skin surface has a pH of about 5 soon after birth, and the bacteriostatic effects of this pH are significant. In addition, newborn skin is covered with host-defense proteins, such as lysozyme and lactoferrin, which contribute importantly to a newborn's defense against bacterial infections ([Walker, Akinbi, Meinzen-Derr, et al, 2008](#)). Consequently, use only plain warm water for bathing. If a cleanser is needed, it should be mild and have a neutral pH. Alkaline soaps, oils, powder, and