

morphine, to relieve pain is controversial because it is thought that they may mask signs of altered consciousness or depress respirations. However, opioids are considered safe because naloxone can be used to reverse opioid effects, such as sedation or respiratory depression. Acetaminophen and codeine are also effective analgesics. Regardless of the drugs used, adequate dosage and regular administration are essential to provide optimum pain relief (see [Pain Assessment](#) and [Pain Management, Chapter 5](#)).

Brain edema may severely depress the gag reflex, necessitating suctioning of oral secretions. Facial edema may also be present, necessitating eye care if the lids remain partially open. Ice compresses applied to the eyes for short periods help relieve the edema. A depressed blink reflex also predisposes the corneas to ulceration. Irrigating the eyes with saline drops and covering them with eye dressings are important steps in preventing this complication.

Support the Family

The family's emotional needs are great when the diagnosis is a brain tumor, and the extent of surgery, any neurologic deficits, the prognosis, and additional therapy influence these feelings. Because few definitive answers can be given before surgery, the surgeon's report is a significant finding that can vary from a completely benign, resected neoplasm to a highly malignant, invasive, and only partially removed tumor. Although parents try to prepare themselves for a potentially fatal diagnosis, it is understandably a shock for them.

Ideally, a nurse who will be involved in the continuing care of this child should be with the family when the physician discusses the prognosis and plan of therapy. Regardless of the future prospects, direct the parents' thinking toward helping the child recover and resume a normal life to his or her fullest potential. Provide an opportunity for the family to share their concerns and questions and encourage parents to verbalize their feelings about the diagnosis.*

During this period the nurse should also discuss with parents what they plan to tell the child. If the child was prepared honestly, as described previously, the diagnosis can be expressed in a similar manner, such as "The surgeon removed most of the tumor, and the