

Poorly-controlled acute pain can predispose patients to chronic pain syndromes. [Box 5-5](#) provides a list of numerous complications of untreated pain in infants. A guiding principle in pain management is that prevention of pain is always better than treatment. Pain that is established and severe is often more difficult to control. When pain is unrelieved, sensory input from injured tissues reaches spinal cord neurons and may enhance subsequent responses. Long-lasting changes in cells within spinal cord pain pathways may occur after a brief painful stimulus and may lead to the development of chronic pain conditions.

### **Box 5-5**

## **Consequences of Untreated Pain in Infants**

### **Acute Consequences**

- Periventricular-intraventricular hemorrhage
- Increased chemical and hormone release
- Breakdown of fat and carbohydrate stores
- Prolonged hyperglycemia
- Higher morbidity for neonatal intensive care unit patients
- Memory of painful events
- Hypersensitivity to pain
- Prolonged response to pain
- Inappropriate innervation of the spinal cord
- Inappropriate response to nonnoxious stimuli
- Lower pain threshold

### **Potential Long-Term Consequences**