

## Nursing Care Management

Nursing care of infants with sepsis involves observation and assessment as outlined for any high-risk infant. Recognition of the existing problem is of paramount importance; it is usually the nurse who observes and assesses infants and identifies that “something is wrong” with them. Awareness of the potential modes of infection transmission also helps the nurse identify infants at risk for developing sepsis. Much of the care of infants with sepsis involves the medical treatment of the illness. Knowledge of the side effects of the specific antibiotic and proper regulation and administration of the drug are vital.

Prolonged antibiotic therapy poses additional hazards for affected infants. Antibiotics predispose infants to growth of resistant organisms and superinfection from fungal or mycotic agents, such as *C. albicans*. Nurses must be alert for evidence of such complications. Nystatin oral suspension is swabbed on the buccal mucosa for prophylaxis against oral candidiasis.

Part of the total care of infants with sepsis is to decrease any additional physiologic or environmental stress. This includes providing an optimum thermoregulated environment and anticipating potential problems such as dehydration or hypoxia. Precautions are implemented to prevent the spread of infection to other newborns, but to be effective, activities must be carried out by all caregivers. Proper hand washing, the use of disposable equipment (e.g., linens, catheters, feeding supplies, IV equipment), disposal of excretions (e.g., vomitus, stool), and adequate housekeeping of the environment and equipment are essential. Because nurses are the most consistent caregivers involved with sick infants, it is usually their responsibility to see that standard precautions are maintained by everyone.

In recent years, ventilator-associated pneumonia has received considerable attention in adult and pediatric intensive care units. Hand hygiene (staff) and oral hygiene (patient) have been shown to decrease the incidence of ventilator-associated pneumonia in children (see [Chapter 21](#)).

Another aspect of caring for infants with sepsis involves observation for signs of complications, including meningitis and septic shock, a severe complication caused by toxins in the