

alterations in sensorium; however some may present only with lethargy and irritability (Bamberger, 2010). The child is extremely irritable and agitated and may develop seizures, photophobia, confusion, hallucinations, drowsiness, stupor, or coma. See Box 27-4 for clinical manifestations of bacterial meningitis. Nuchal rigidity is manifested by inability to flex neck and place chin on chest, as well as presence of Kernig and Brudzinski signs. The Kernig sign is present if the patient (in the supine position with the hip and knee flexed at 90 degrees), cannot extend the knee more than 135 degrees and pain is felt in the hamstrings. Flexion of the opposite knee may also occur. The Brudzinski sign is present if the patient, while in the supine position, flexes the lower extremities if passive flexion of the neck is attempted.

Nursing Alert

Any child who is ill and develops a purpuric or petechial rash may have meningococemia and must receive medical attention immediately.

Box 27-4

Clinical Manifestations of Bacterial Meningitis

Children and Adolescents

Usually abrupt onset

Fever

Chills

Headache

Vomiting

Alterations in sensorium

Seizures (often the initial sign)