

the nurse plays a key role in assessing the infant and providing prescribed therapy. Additional laboratory testing may be indicated, as well as pelvic and abdominal ultrasonography to evaluate for gonads, uterus, and vagina.

## **Family Support**

The birth of a child with ambiguous genitalia has been termed a *psychosocial emergency for the family*. They require support because the answers to a seemingly simple question as to what sex is their child requires evaluation and time. Involvement in a multidisciplinary team that may include endocrinology, urology, genetics, surgeons, in addition to nurses and social workers can make clear communication challenging and the nurse may be instrumental in coordinating family meetings with the team.

The infant and child with DSD pose very complex and controversial management questions, including sex assignment and potential genital surgery. Traditional approaches are being questioned and continue to evolve. Referral to a specialized center for children with DSD is recommended.

## **Psychological Problems Related to Genital Surgery**

Improved understanding of the psychological implications of genitourinary surgery in children, improvements in technical aspects of surgery, and advances in pediatric anesthesia have resulted in modifications of the surgical approach to children requiring genitourinary surgery. Some of the problems of hospitalization, separation, and anxiety can be eased by hospital practices that are sensitive to the child's needs (see [Chapter 19](#)).

A child's body image is largely derived as a result of feedback from primary caregivers and peers; and parental anxiety regarding an acceptable physical appearance is readily communicated to an affected child. This subtle communication increases the risk of development of a distorted body image and early repair may facilitate a positive body image. Sexual body image is another area that has been thought to be largely a function of socialization. In terms of disorders of sex development, this becomes a much more complex and multifaceted area.

The child's reaction to surgery is related to emotional and cognitive development. Separation of parent and child is important