

given to them by the physician and neurosurgeon, including information about what to expect. They are especially frightened of any procedure that involves the brain, and the fear of disability or brain damage is real and pervasive. Nurses can calm their anxiety with explanations of the rationale underlying the various nursing and medical activities, such as positioning or testing, and by simply being available and willing to listen to their concerns.

To prepare for the child's discharge and home care, instruct the parents on how to recognize signs that indicate shunt malfunction or infection. Active children may have injuries, such as a fall, that can damage the shunt, and the tubing may pull out of the distal insertion site or become disconnected during normal growth. Contact sports should be avoided, and a helmet should be worn when outside play is vigorous. It is also important for the nurse to encourage families to enroll infants and toddlers with hydrocephalus into an early childhood development program.

The management of hydrocephalus in a child is a demanding task for both family and health professionals, and helping the family cope with the child's difficulties is an important nursing responsibility. Children with hydrocephalus have lifelong special health care needs and require evaluation on a regular basis. The overall aim is to establish realistic goals and an appropriate educational program that will help the child to achieve his or her optimal potential. Families can be referred to community agencies for support and guidance. The National Hydrocephalus Foundation\* and the Hydrocephalus Association<sup>†</sup> provide information on the condition for families and assist interested groups in establishing local organizations.

## **NCLEX Review Questions**

1. You are the nurse assigned to care for a child with a basilar skull fracture. Your most important nursing observation is change in level of consciousness (LOC). You will be highly alert for:
  - a. Alterations in vital signs that often appear before alterations in consciousness or focal neurologic signs
  - b. Bleeding from the ear, which is indicative of an anterior basal skull fracture