

upset than urban children, possibly because urban children have opportunities to become familiar with a local hospital. Because separation is such an important issue surrounding hospitalization for young children, children who are active and strong willed tend to fare better when hospitalized than youngsters who are passive. Consequently, nurses should be alert to children who passively accept all changes and requests; these children may need more support than “oppositional” children.

Box 19-3

Risk Factors That Increase Children's Vulnerability to the Stresses of Hospitalization

“Difficult” temperament

Lack of fit between child and parent

Age (especially between 6 months old and 5 years old)

Male gender

Below-average intelligence

Multiple and continuing stresses (e.g., frequent hospitalizations)

The stressors of hospitalization may cause young children to experience short- and long-term negative outcomes. Adverse outcomes may be related to the length and number of admissions, multiple invasive procedures, and the parents' anxiety. Common responses include regression, separation anxiety, apathy, fears, and sleeping disturbances, especially for children younger than 7 years old ([Melnyk, 2000](#)). Supportive practices, such as family-centered care and frequent family visiting, may lessen the detrimental effects of such admissions. Nurses should attempt to identify children at risk for poor coping strategies ([Small, 2002](#)).

Changes in the Pediatric Population