

bifida. A small sinus, which may or may not be communicating with the spine, is a pilonidal sinus. It is frequently covered with a tuft of hair. Although it may have no pathologic significance, a pilonidal cyst may indicate the existence of spina bifida occulta or be a portal of entry into the spinal column. With the infant still prone, note symmetry of the gluteal folds. Report any evidence of asymmetry. Skilled examiners test for developmental dysplasia of the hip (see [Chapter 29](#)).

The presence of an anal orifice and passage of meconium from the anal orifice during the first 24 to 48 hours of life indicates anal patency. If an imperforate anus is suspected, report this to the primary practitioner for further evaluation.

Nursing Alert

The presence of meconium or stool in the rectal area is not an indication of rectal patency; a fistula may exist wherein stool is evacuated via the vagina, scrotum, or raphe. Therefore, it is imperative that anal patency be checked with a small rubber catheter if doubt regarding patency exists.

Extremities

Examine the extremities for symmetry, range of motion, and signs of malformation. Count the fingers and toes and note any supernumerary digits (**polydactyly**) or fusion of digits (**syndactyly**). A partial syndactyly between the second and third toes is a common variation seen in otherwise normal infants. The nail beds should be pink, although slight blueness is evident in acrocyanosis.

The palms of the hands should have the usual creases. Full-term newborns usually have creases covering the entire sole of the foot. The soles of the feet are flat with prominent fat pads.

Observe range of motion of the extremities throughout the entire examination. The absence of arm movement signals a potential birth injury paralysis, such as Klumpke or Erb-Duchenne palsy. An asymmetric or partial Moro reflex should alert the practitioner to further evaluate upper extremity mobility. Examine the lower extremities for limb length, symmetry, and hip abduction and flexion. Newborns demonstrate full range of motion in the elbow,