

parents provide? Do they talk to the infant, to each other, or to no one? How do they look at the infant—direct visual contact, avoidance of eye contact, or looking at other people or objects?

- How comfortable do the parents appear in terms of caring for the infant? Do they express any concern regarding their ability or disgust for certain activities, such as changing diapers?
- What type of affection do they demonstrate to the newborn, such as smiling, stroking, kissing, or rocking?
- If the infant is fussy, what kinds of comforting techniques do the parents use, such as rocking, swaddling, talking, or stroking?

Physical Assessment

An essential aspect of the care of the newborn is a thorough physical assessment that includes estimation of gestational age and physical examination to identify normal characteristics and existing abnormalities. These initial and ongoing assessments are critical to establishing baseline data for planning, implementing, and evaluating care and are a nursing priority in caring for the newborn. The discussion of physical examination focuses on normal findings and variations from the norm that require little or no intervention. Readers are encouraged to review [Chapter 4](#) for further discussion of examination techniques. General guidelines for conducting a physical examination are presented in the [Nursing Care Guidelines](#) box. [Table 7-4](#) summarizes physical examination of newborns.

Nursing Care Guidelines

Physical Examination of the Newborn

1. Provide a normothermic and nonstimulating examination area.
2. Check that equipment and supplies are working properly and are accessible.
3. Undress only the body area examined to prevent heat loss.