

disease, especially chickenpox. If the child has been exposed to the varicella virus, varicella-zoster immune globulin given within 96 hours may favorably alter the course of the disease. Antiviral agents, such as acyclovir, should be given if the child develops varicella. Without treatment, death from disseminated varicella occurs in 7% to 20% of patients, due to disseminated disease in the liver, lung, and CNS ([Ardura and Koh, 2016](#)). (See also [Immunizations, Chapter 6](#).)

Nursing Alert

Children vaccinated 2 weeks before or during chemotherapy should be considered unimmunized and should be revaccinated or receive live virus vaccines 6 months after chemotherapy has stopped ([Ruggiero, Battista, Coccia, et al, 2011](#)). Most institutions have individual guidelines regarding vaccinations in a child undergoing immunosuppressive therapy. The nurse should be aware of these guidelines and educate patients and families.

Family Education

Nurses working with children who have cancer have a significant supportive role in helping the family understand the various therapies, preventing or managing expected side effects or toxicities, and observing for late effects of treatment. Education is a constant feature of the nursing role, especially in terms of new treatments, clinical trials, and home care. Because of the anxiety generated by the diagnosis of cancer, some families may resort to unproven methods of treatment. Nurses are instrumental in helping families avoid seeking unproven and potentially unsafe “remedies” by encouraging the families to discuss concerns and questions openly with their health care provider. The American Cancer Society and local and state medical societies are reliable sources of information concerning research on investigational versus quack methods of cancer therapy. The Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses* has developed numerous educational materials for family and child teaching. The American Childhood Cancer Organization[†] is an international organization providing support, education, and advocacy programs for children with cancer and their families.