

## PAEDIATRICS

Paediatrics is a medical section that is concerned with children. The purpose of this article is to provide information about growth and development of a baby as a basis for identifying the nursing needs of small patients. Individual characteristics, growth and rate of maturation vary (of every child and are affected by heredity, sex and external factors like nutrition and illness or injury. Body length of newborn infants ranges from 45 to 53 cm and by the time of puberty, height is usually three times the birth length. Average birth weight is about 3500g. The greatest weight gain occurs during infancy and puberty. It begins earlier in females than in males, Females reach full physical growth by age 16 to 18, but males continue to grow for more years. Potential mental capacity is inherited and is present at birth but it is strongly influenced by multiple factors such as physical health, nutrition and mental stimulation through games, stories, etc; and is termed intelligence. It can be defined as ability to reason, to think in abstract terms, and to learn from experience. Intelligence quotient (IQ) is an estimate of mental ability based on performance on a standardized test. The test score, known as mental age, is divided by chronological age and the quotient is multiplied by 100. A score between 90-110 indicates average intelligence. A score above 140 is considered superior and the individual is termed gifted. A score below 90 indicated less-than-average intelligence and the person might be slow or mentally retarded. Nursing a child differs from caring for an adult in several ways. Illness and pain are new and frightening experience to a young child and he has no understanding of them. If hospitalisation is necessary, the separation from parents, strangeness, loneliness and lack of possibility to play have adverse effects. The most significant role in the care of children is observation, because infants are unable to describe their discomforts and needs. Pertinent factors that should be noted and recorded include the following:

- a) Crying, whether it is "normal" or caused due to pain,
- b) Body movements and positions, whether the baby protests when a particular part or area is moved or touched,
- c) Abnormal loss or increase in muscle tension,
- d) Frequent brushing or rubbing of a part of the body,
- e) Apathy and passivity,
- f) Failure to eat and drink,
- g) Change in number and character of stools and urine,
- h) Skin eruptions, facial expression and colour,
- i) Excessive sweating, that is not normal and may indicate some autonomic nerve dysfunction,
- j) Any behaviour that differs from that expected for the child.