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NURSING CARE OF NEWBORNS

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Abstract

Nursing care of newborns is a critical component of neonatal healthcare that focuses on promoting physiological stability, preventing complications, and supporting healthy growth and development during the first 28 days of life. The neonatal period is marked by rapid adaptation to extrauterine life, requiring continuous professional observation and evidence-based interventions. This abstract highlights the essential roles of nurses in maintaining thermoregulation, monitoring vital signs, ensuring adequate nutrition, and preventing infection in newborns. Effective thermoregulation is necessary because newborns are vulnerable to hypothermia due to immature temperature control mechanisms. Regular assessment of respiratory and cardiovascular parameters enables early detection of neonatal disorders. Nutritional support, particularly exclusive breastfeeding, provides optimal nutrients and immunological protection, while nursing guidance ensures proper feeding techniques and tolerance. Infection control remains a cornerstone of neonatal nursing practice through strict hygiene, umbilical cord care, and environmental safety. In addition, nurses play a key role in parent education, empowering families to recognize danger signs and provide appropriate care at home. High-quality nursing care contributes significantly to reducing neonatal morbidity and mortality and improving overall neonatal outcomes.

Keywords: newborn, neonatal care, nursing practice, thermoregulation, breastfeeding, infection prevention, vital signs monitoring, parent education, neonatal health, early intervention.

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Introduction

The neonatal period, defined as the first 28 days of life, represents one of the most critical phases in human development. During this time, the newborn undergoes rapid physiological, metabolic, and environmental adaptation after leaving the protective intrauterine environment. Successful transition to extrauterine life depends largely on the quality of healthcare provided immediately after birth and throughout the neonatal period. Among healthcare professionals, nurses play a central role in ensuring newborn survival, stability, and healthy development. Therefore, nursing care of newborns is a fundamental component of modern healthcare systems worldwide. Globally, neonatal mortality remains a major public health concern despite advances in medical science. According to international health organizations, a significant proportion of under-five deaths occur within the first month of life, mainly due to prematurity, birth asphyxia, infections, and congenital abnormalities. Many of these conditions are preventable or manageable through timely, evidence-based nursing interventions. Nurses are often the first professionals to assess the newborn, initiate life-supporting measures, and provide continuous monitoring during this vulnerable stage. Their competence directly influences neonatal outcomes and long-term health. The transition from intrauterine to extrauterine life requires major physiological adjustments. At birth, the newborn must establish independent respiration, adapt cardiovascular circulation, regulate body temperature, and maintain metabolic balance. Unlike adults, newborns have immature organ systems, limited energy reserves, and reduced ability to respond to environmental stressors. For example, ineffective thermoregulation exposes them to hypothermia, which may lead to respiratory distress, hypoglycemia, and increased risk of infection. Nursing care focuses on supporting these adaptive processes through warmth maintenance, airway management, observation, and prompt intervention when abnormalities are detected. One of the core responsibilities of neonatal nursing is the continuous assessment and monitoring

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of vital signs. Respiratory rate, heart rate, oxygen saturation, body temperature, and skin color provide essential information about the newborn's physiological condition. Early identification of deviations allows nurses to intervene before complications become severe. Neonatal nurses also perform physical examinations, evaluate reflexes, assess feeding ability, and monitor weight changes. These actions help detect conditions such as respiratory distress syndrome, neonatal jaundice, hypoglycemia, and sepsis at an early stage. Nutrition is another cornerstone of newborn care. Adequate nutrition is vital for growth, immune protection, and neurological development. Exclusive breastfeeding is internationally recommended as the optimal source of nutrition for newborns because breast milk contains balanced nutrients, antibodies, and bioactive components that protect against infections and promote development. Nurses support mothers in initiating breastfeeding, teaching correct positioning and attachment techniques, and overcoming common difficulties. In cases where breastfeeding is not possible, nurses ensure safe formula feeding while monitoring tolerance and hydration status. Infection prevention is especially important during the neonatal period because newborns have immature immune systems. Even minor infections can progress rapidly and become life-threatening. Therefore, strict adherence to aseptic techniques is a major component of nursing practice. Umbilical cord care, skin hygiene, hand hygiene, and maintaining a clean environment reduce the risk of neonatal sepsis. Nurses also educate parents on infection prevention strategies both in the hospital and at home.

Another significant aspect of nursing care of newborns is parent education and psychosocial support. The birth of a child is a major life event that may be accompanied by anxiety, uncertainty, and lack of experience. Nurses guide parents in daily care activities such as bathing, diapering, feeding, and safe sleeping positions. They also teach families how to recognize danger signs including poor feeding, fever, breathing difficulty, and jaundice. Empowering parents with knowledge increases their confidence and contributes to better

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neonatal outcomes after discharge. Modern neonatal nursing practice is based on evidence-based care, interdisciplinary collaboration, and continuous professional development. Advances in technology, such as incubators, monitoring systems, and neonatal intensive care units, have significantly improved survival rates, especially for premature and low-birth-weight infants. However, technology alone is not sufficient. The professional competence, clinical judgment, and compassionate care provided by nurses remain the foundation of effective neonatal healthcare.

In conclusion, nursing care of newborns is a complex and essential field that integrates clinical skills, scientific knowledge, and human compassion. During the neonatal period, timely and high-quality nursing interventions support physiological adaptation, prevent complications, promote healthy growth, and strengthen family involvement in care. Understanding the importance of neonatal nursing care is crucial for improving neonatal survival and ensuring a healthy start to life.

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