

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome

Congratulations on the arrival of your new baby! We are here to provide you and your baby with the best care possible. This pamphlet will help you learn how to care for your baby.

What is neonatal abstinence syndrome?

- Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) happens when a baby withdraws from medication that you have been taking during your pregnancy.
- Most babies will show signs of withdrawal in 2 to 3 days, but some may not show signs until 4 to 5 days after birth.
- Your baby should stay in the hospital until most of their symptoms are gone. This is different for each baby, but will be at least 7 days (1 week).

What are the symptoms of NAS?

- Common symptoms of NAS include:
 - › Tremors or shaking of the arms and legs
 - › Tense or tight muscles in the arms and legs
 - › Fussiness
 - › Problems with eating and sleeping
 - › Hard to settle or calm down
 - › Wanting to suck even when not hungry
 - › Spitting-up or vomiting (throwing up)
 - › Very runny poops
 - › Losing too much weight or not gaining weight

What will my health care team do to help my baby?

- We will watch your baby closely for signs of withdrawal. A nurse will check with you every 3 to 4 hours to see how you and your baby are doing. We will check your baby for signs of NAS for at least 5 to 7 days.
- If your baby is having problems eating, sleeping, or settling, we will share with you ways you can help them.
- If your baby is still having problems after we try to help settle them, we may need to give them medication.
- You can watch your baby for signs of withdrawal by keeping track of:
 - › how well your baby is eating.
 - › how well your baby is sleeping.
 - › how easily you can get your baby to settle or calm down.
 - › what helps your baby to settle (such as a quiet room, holding your baby skin-to-skin, swaddling, sucking on a soother, low lighting or noise).
 - › if your baby is having runny poops.

We will give you a Newborn Care Diary to help you record this information.

What else can I do to help my baby?

- While in the hospital, you are a very important part of your baby's care. No one can comfort your baby like you can. Your baby recognizes your voice, your smell, and your heartbeat. This is comforting to them. When babies are able to settle quicker and sleep longer, they can grow and become stronger. This is why your role in their care is so important — **you are the most important person to your baby!**

- **Stay together:** Your baby will do best if they are kept close to you. This will make them more comfortable and will help you respond to them more quickly.
- **Skin-to-skin: Spend as much time as possible, when you are awake, holding your baby skin-to-skin. This will help them settle more quickly, and sleep and feed better.** It will also help them to adjust to life in the outside world; regulate their heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar, breathing, and body temperature; lower pain; feel safe and warm; calm down when fussy; cry less; and get breastfeeding off to a good start. It will also help with your milk supply if you are breastfeeding.
- **Soothe:** Offer your baby a soother after they finish eating.
- **Swaddle and cuddle:** When you are not able to hold your baby skin-to-skin, swaddle and cuddle them often to help settle them.
- **Quiet, calm room:** Keep the lights in your room dim. Speak and sing softly to your baby. Sounds and voices at safe levels can help their sense of hearing develop. Limit visitors for less disruptions.
- **Watch for hunger cues:** Your baby will feed better and settle more easily if you feed them at least every 3 hours, or as soon as they show cues that they are hungry. Hunger cues may include licking their lips, making smacking sounds, sticking their tongue out, sucking on anything that is nearby, rooting (turning their head and opening their mouth), or making hand to mouth movements.

What if my baby needs medication?

- If your baby needs medication for NAS, they will stay at the hospital for at least 2 weeks. We will need to adjust the dose of medication that your baby takes until we find the amount that is right for them. They will have to be weaned off of the medication before discharge. This is done slowly and carefully, depending on your baby's symptoms.
- **It is important that you stay with your baby during this time.** You are the most important person to your baby! They will be more comfortable if you are caring for them.
- It is important for you to have a plan in case this happens.
 - › If you cannot be at the hospital, ask a family member or close friend to be available to care for your baby.
 - › Bring enough personal items and clothing to the hospital or arrange for a family member or friend to bring them for you.
 - › Arrange for someone to care for your other children or pets, if needed.
 - › It may be hard to talk with your family or friends about why your baby needs to stay at the hospital. Your nurse, primary health care provider, or social worker may be able to help with this.

When can my baby go home?

Your baby is ready to go home when they:

- › are feeding and sleeping well.
- › are easy to calm down.
- › are gaining weight.
- › have a healthy heart rate, regular breathing, and normal temperature.
- › have had the Newborn Screening and Hearing Screening.
- › no longer need medication for NAS.
- › have a followup appointment arranged with a primary health care provider.