

Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care  
**NEWBORN WITHDRAWAL  
PROJECT**

### Breastfeeding

- If you are on medicine for opioid withdrawal or are taking other prescribed medicines, you can probably breastfeed your baby or give your baby pumped breast milk. Breastfeeding can help you bond with your baby and help your baby through withdrawal.
- If you start breastfeeding your baby or giving your baby pumped breast milk, do not stop suddenly. The medicine your baby gets from your breast milk may help your baby's withdrawal. Talk to your health care provider if you want to stop breastfeeding.
- If you are taking medicines or drugs that a health care provider did not prescribe, do not breastfeed your baby or give your baby pumped breast milk.
- Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about breastfeeding.

### Weaning your baby off medications

- The kind and amount of medicine your baby takes will change until your baby stops having signs of withdrawal.
- Each baby is different in how he or she responds.
- Some babies may need to be in the hospital and on medication for 2 months or more.
- Work with your provider as your baby's dose may need to be adjusted.

### Parents' feelings

- Parents describe the time that their baby spends in withdrawal as an emotional roller coaster.
- The hospital staff understands this is a very stressful and emotional time. Take comfort in knowing that we all have the same goals—to help you and your baby through withdrawal and to get your baby home as soon as possible.

### Helping yourself

- If you are on prescribed medications, you may need to have your medication dose adjusted after your baby's birth.
- Spend as much time as possible with your baby during this time.
- Find out about other services available to help you.

### When your baby goes home

- Your baby may still have symptoms of withdrawal for up to 6 months. Symptoms gradually decrease over time.
- Your baby may continue to have:
  - Difficulty breastfeeding or bottle feeding
  - Colic, or excessive crying that doesn't stop no matter what you do
  - Difficulty sleeping
  - Slow weight gain
- Keep all appointments for your baby.
- Get any medication refills.
- Get help from family/friends to care for your baby if you need a break.
- Use available community services. Talk to your health care provider or social worker about what services are available for you.
- If you are on medications, work with your care providers. They may have to adjust your dose.



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Funded in part by the MCH Title V Services Block Grant, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) *A Guide for Parents*

*A* baby who is born to a mother taking drugs (prescribed or not) may become addicted during pregnancy. The baby may show signs of withdrawal after birth. The baby may be very fussy and cry for a long time. Some babies are very sleepy but may be very fussy when they wake up. They may be hard to feed and comfort. Some babies do not even want to be held and touched. The effects of the drugs on the baby's brain cause the symptoms. Health care providers call the signs and symptoms of withdrawal Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, or NAS.



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## Withdrawal

- Babies usually begin to show signs of withdrawal anywhere from birth to 7 days after birth.
- The time it takes for signs to appear in babies may depend on:
  - The medications or drugs a woman may be taking
  - When the woman had her last dose
  - If the baby is breastfeeding

## NAS scoring system

- Health care providers use NAS scoring to measure how bad a baby's withdrawal symptoms are.
- If your baby goes through withdrawal, your baby's health care provider will decide when and how often to do the scoring.
- If your baby has high scores on the withdrawal scale, your baby's health care provider will suggest ways to calm your baby.
- If the calming suggestions don't work, your baby's health care provider may use medications to treat withdrawal symptoms.

## If the things you can do don't calm your baby

- Your baby's health care provider may give your baby medicine.
- The kind of medicine and how much will depend on:
  - The NAS scores
  - Your baby's weight
  - The medicines or drugs you took during pregnancy. Make sure to tell your health care provider about all medicines or drugs you took while you were pregnant.

## How babies behave when withdrawing from drugs, and what you can do to help

Try not to let your baby reach a frantic crying state. Watch for early signs that your baby needs care. Your baby may sneeze or yawn more than normal, shiver or seem jumpy, frown or cry, or have changes in skin color. Try to soothe your baby before you see these signs. Here are some ideas:

BABY'S BEHAVIOR	WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP
<i>Prolonged and/or high-pitched crying</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold your baby close to your body.</li> <li>• Decrease loud noises, bright lights, or touching your baby too much.</li> <li>• Humming and gentle rocking may help.</li> </ul>
<i>Sleeplessness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce noise, bright lights, and patting, or touching your baby too much.</li> <li>• Soft, gentle music and rocking may help.</li> <li>• Keep your baby's diaper area clean and dry. Watch for redness or diaper rash, and do what your baby's health care provider suggests.</li> <li>• Feed your baby when he or she is hungry. Your baby may want to eat often.</li> </ul>
<i>Excessive sucking of fists</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a pacifier.</li> <li>• Cover your baby's hands with gloves or mittens if his or her skin becomes sore.</li> <li>• Keep his or her hands clean.</li> <li>• Avoid lotions and creams on your baby's hands.</li> </ul>
<i>Difficult or poor feeding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feed small amounts often.</li> <li>• Feed in a quiet, calm place with little noise and activity.</li> <li>• Allow time for rest during feedings.</li> </ul>
<i>Sneezing, stuffy nose or breathing troubles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your baby's nose and mouth clean.</li> <li>• Don't put too many clothes or blankets on your baby.</li> <li>• When your baby is awake, hold him or her upright with his or her bottom on your lap, and support his or her chest with your hand.</li> <li>• Feed small amounts more often.</li> <li>• Feed your baby slowly, allowing for rest periods during feedings.</li> <li>• Always place your baby to sleep on his or her back.</li> </ul>
<i>Spitting up or vomiting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support your baby's cheeks and lower jaw to help sucking and swallowing.</li> <li>• Burp your baby each time he or she stops sucking and after each feeding.</li> <li>• Keep your baby clean, and keep bedding free of vomit. The smell may make your baby uncomfortable, and soiled bedding may make your baby's skin sore.</li> </ul>
<i>Easily upset or bothered</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep things quiet for your baby.</li> <li>• Try not to touch your baby too much.</li> <li>• Try not to wake him or her if he or she is sleeping.</li> <li>• Swaddle your baby loosely, but avoid over-wrapping to prevent overheating.</li> </ul>