

A protocol for rooming-in and for the use of morphine (if required) for opiate exposed babies that will help in reassuring staff about the safety of this treatment modality.

All opiate (and drug exposed babies) are kept in hospital with the mom for at least 7-8 days AND until the baby is gaining weight consistently for 2-3 days.

The babies room-in with the mom immediately after birth. Moms are encouraged and taught how to hold and cuddle their baby. This is important to settle the baby and minimize the withdrawal. We weigh all the babies DAILY, and generally accept up to a 10% weight loss in the first few days. We ignore subjective symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, yawning, small tremors etc, and really concentrate on the objective symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, and inability to feed well. The impact of these symptoms on the baby's ability to thrive is measured objectively with daily weighing.

We find we can minimize crying, spitting up, and not settling by allowing the babies to remain in the mom's arms, with plenty of holding and cuddling. If the baby settles in the mom's arms it is not significantly withdrawing.

It is important to remember that "normal" babies usually take 36-72 hours (at least) to settle until the mom's breast milk comes in and breastfeeding is established.

WE AVOID TREATING WITH MORPHINE DURING THIS INITIAL 36-72 HOURS.

If we start morphine, we start at a loading dose of 0.03 mg per kilogram every 3 hours (eg. a 3kg baby gets 0.09 mg every 3 hours). Typically the baby will settle in 2-3 days (i.e. feeding well and GAINING WEIGHT) We then decrease the morphine by 0.02 mg/kg every 2 days (i.e. decrease to 0.07 mg every 3 hours for 2 days) until the baby is weaned off the morphine.

WE TREAT THE BABIES WHILE STILL IN THE MOM'S CARE IN THE ROOM. THIS USUALLY MEANS THAT THE BABY IS OFF MORPHINE WITHIN 10-14 DAYS.

We are finding that almost all babies exposed to less than 80-100 mg of morphine do not require morphine as long as the baby is in the moms care and she is focused and cuddling and holding her baby.

Finally we have had success in avoiding treatment with morphine by bottle feeding (breastmilk and/or formula) if the breastfeeding is not going well and the baby is losing significant weight.

