

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome

What is Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)?

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) occurs when a baby is exposed to certain medications, such as, opiates (including heroin, methadone and morphine), stimulants, sedatives, alcohol and some antidepressants either during pregnancy.

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome may also occur as the result of the use of pain or sedation medication used during your baby's stay in the Special Care Nursery.

How is Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Diagnosed?

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome can be diagnosed through the use of some tests to include a urine test performed on the mother, stool testing on your baby and/or the medication history of the mother and symptoms of your baby.

Symptoms in your baby may include:

- High pitched cry
- Tremors/ jittery movements
- Stuffy nose/ sneezing
- Feeding problems, including poor weight gain
- Increased breathing rate
- Irritability
- Fever
- Problems sleeping
- Tense arms, legs and back
- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Skin irritation

How is Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Treated?

Your baby's nurse will be using a scoring system to frequently assess the severity of your baby's withdrawal. Based upon the score your baby may be provided comfort measures and medication to ease the symptoms. Not all babies will need comfort measures and medication.

Your baby may go home with the need for comfort measures. Below are some ways you can help ease the symptoms of withdrawal in your baby.

Symptoms	Care
Sneezing, stuffy nose, increased breathing rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep baby's nose and mouth clear • Feed slowly and allow rest • Offer smaller more frequent feeds
Frequent and prolonged crying, increased breathing rate, sleeping problems, tense arms, legs, back, poor weight gain, fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold firmly in light blanket • Hold skin to skin • Provide dark, quiet, environment • Decrease noise, loud talking, visual stimuli • Swaddle • Rock in a gentle swaying motion • Avoid overheating by overdressing or wrapping too tight
Feeding problems, poor weight gain, vomiting, diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed small amounts often • Burp frequently to prevent vomiting • Feed on demand • Breast feed consistently • Allow rest in between sucking
Excessive sucking, restlessness, skin irritation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer pacifier or breast • Keep skin clean and dry • Use prescribed diaper ointment with every diaper change

How long can Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Last?

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome may last for some time. You may wish to discuss this further with your baby's physician.

Parents may feel that the period of time during withdrawal as an emotional roller coaster. Please know that your team of doctors, nurses, social workers and developmental physical and feeding therapists will help you and your baby to transition from their stay in the Special Care Nursery to home. You are an essential part of the team. Your presence and participation in the care of your baby are very important. You and your family are encouraged to spend as much time as possible with your baby in the Special Care Nursery. Loving touch and cuddling from you and your family will help your baby during the treatment period.