What is neonatal abstinence syndrome?

Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) happens in babies who were exposed to potentially addictive drugs before they were born. These can be:

- Prescription drugs (for example, oxycodone for chronic pain, methadone)
- Illegal (street) drugs (for example, cocaine/crack, heroin, crystal meth)

The baby becomes addicted to the drugs while still in the womb. After birth, the baby goes through a withdrawal process. Those symptoms make up NAS.

What are the symptoms of NAS?

Symptoms depend on many factors, including, but not limited to:

- Type of drug used
- How often (and for how long) the drug was used
- How much of the drug was used
- Whether the baby was born early (prematurely)

Most symptoms of NAS occur within a few days of birth. They include:

- Excessive crying and/or fussiness
- High-pitched crying
- Poor feeding
- Fever and/or sweating
- Rapid breathing
- Blotchy skin coloring (mottling)
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting
- Increased reflexes
- Trouble sleeping
- Stuffy nose, sneezing
- Seizures or tremors
Treating Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome

What treatment will my baby receive?
Treatment for NAS depends on the baby’s health and whether or not the baby was born early. Treatment may include:

- **Intravenous** (IV) fluids if the baby is **dehydrated**
- Higher-calorie formula or more frequent feedings if the baby is not gaining weight and does not have diarrhea
- Medicine to treat symptoms

Babies with NAS are often fussy. To help calm the infant, try:

- Gentle rocking
- Decreasing noise and light
- Swaddling (wrapping the baby snugly). Your health care team will show you how to swaddle your baby correctly

What will happen next?
Treatment helps relieve symptoms of NAS. Some babies may have long-term effects from drug addiction. These babies may be referred to a specialist in child development. Talk to the health care team. They can answer any questions you have about your baby.

Glossary

**Abstinence** – doing without (in this case, the baby is no longer exposed to the addictive drug after birth)

**Dehydrated** – too little water in the body

**Intravenous** – through a vein

**Neonatal** – newborn

**Withdrawal** – group of symptoms that occur when an addictive drug is stopped suddenly

Ask the health care team when you have questions—they are there to help.

Please visit [www.nicu-pet.com](http://www.nicu-pet.com) to download additional copies.

NOTES:

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------