

# UNDERSTANDING Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome

# NAS



## 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.

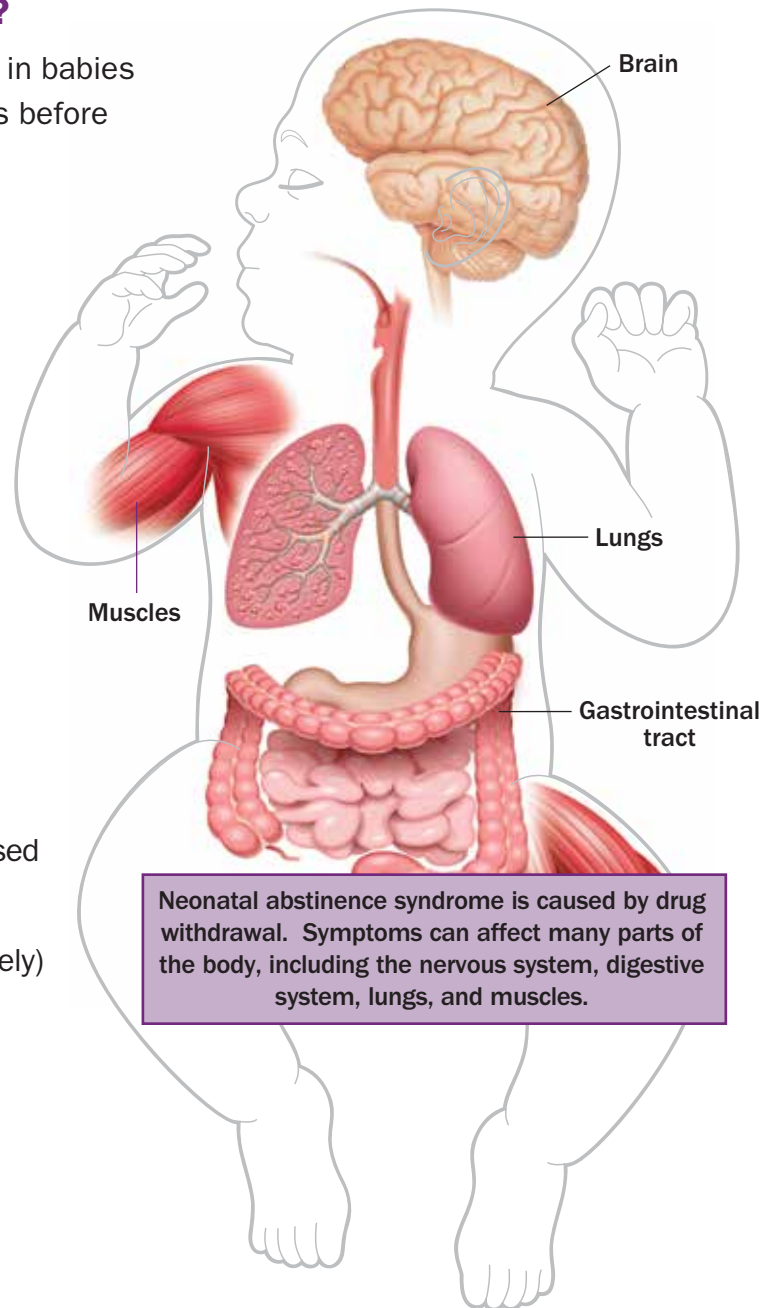
## What are the symptoms of NAS?

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.***

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## NOTES:

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