What to Expect When Your Baby Has Withdrawal

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) is a way to explain what happens when a baby was exposed to substances as a fetus and experiences withdrawal after birth.

What drugs cause NAS?

If you are pregnant and using certain medications or drugs, your unborn baby may develop dependence and eventually may need medicine to function after birth.

It's important for you to tell your nurse and the baby's doctors about all drugs used during your pregnancy. This will help the health care team:

- Treat your baby with the correct medicines.
- Avoid medications your baby does not need.
- Give your baby the best possible care.

Pain medications, opioids, or opiates:

- Codeine
- Darvon
- Demerol
- Fentanyl
- Heroin
- Morphine
- Oxycodone
- Percocet

These drugs are used as treatment or maintenance to stabilize your pregnancy:

- Methadone
- Suboxone

They cause NAS but will help you deliver a healthier newborn.

What to expect?

Some signs you may see as your baby goes through withdrawal:

- Shaking.
- High pitch excessive crying.
- Stuffy nose or sneezing.
- Fever.
- Hard time breathing, sleeping, or feeding.
- Vomiting, diarrhea, and dehydration.

Your baby will need extra care after he or she is born, and may need to stay at the hospital after you are discharged.

All babies need the same care but your baby will need extra:

- Swaddling.
- Rocking.
- Frequent feedings and burping.

Your baby may need to receive medicine for his or her symptoms, and supportive treatment such as:

- Extra bonding and holding
- Providing a quiet, dimly-lighted environment with little stimulation.

During the hospital stay:

Baby's health	Approximate time in hospital	Why	After discharge
Mild symptoms and no need for medication	3–7 days	Kept for observation	Parents will watch for mild symptoms at home
Medications needed	7+ days	Treated for withdrawal and weaned off medications	
Multiple drug exposure and medication needed	Based on signs and symptoms		

If you are ready for treatment, call the Washington Recovery Helpline:

1-866-789-1511

Baby may go home when:

- Gaining weight steadily.
- Eating enough food to grow.
- No longer showing significant signs of withdrawal.

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY 711).

Washington State Department of Health
DOH 350-003 June 2015