



You are the best treatment!

**Caring for your baby with
neonatal withdrawal**

Congratulations on the birth of your baby!

Northern Health is committed to providing you and your baby with the best care possible. The information below will help you learn how to best care for your baby after birth.



WHAT IS NEONATAL WITHDRAWAL?

Neonatal withdrawal happens after birth when some medicines are taken during pregnancy. Most babies show signs 24 to 48 hours after birth, but it could take up to 5 days. Your baby will stay in hospital until they are showing signs of feeling better without needing medicines. We use a program called Eat Sleep Console (ESC) to help keep track of how your baby is doing.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF WITHDRAWAL IN BABIES?

SIGN 1 Tremors or shaking of arms or legs

SIGN 2 Tense or tight muscles in arms or legs

SIGN 3 Crying more often

SIGN 4 Wanting to eat less often or more often

SIGN 5 Needing extra help to sleep

SIGN 6 Spitting up or vomiting more often

SIGN 7 Loose or watery poops

HOW DO YOU CHECK FOR WITHDRAWAL?

We will watch your baby closely for signs of withdrawal. We will check on your baby every few hours after birth until you go home. Let your nurse know when your baby wakes to feed as this is the best time to check on your baby.

You can also help by filling out the Newborn Care Diary to help keep track of:

- Eating
- Sleeping
- Consoling (how quickly your baby calms down)
- What keeps your baby calm (cuddling, skin-to-skin, swaddling, using a soother, calm and quiet room)
- Dirty and wet diapers



WHAT WILL MY CARE TEAM DO TO MAKE SURE MY BABY IS HEALTHY?

During your baby's time in the hospital, YOU will be your baby's primary caregiver. It is very important that you stay with your baby as much as possible. You are also able to have family members help you hold and feed your baby. Your baby may need to stay in the hospital for less time if they have you or a caregiver with them all of the time.

We will be here to help you, but your baby will do best if the parents are the ones providing the care.

- We will monitor your baby in the hospital for at least 2 to 4 days.
- If your baby has trouble with eating, sleeping, or consoling, we will teach you ways to help your baby.
- If your baby is still showing signs of withdrawal after all the care we are providing as a team with you, we may talk to you about trying medicines to help.



HOW CAN I BEST HELP MY BABY?

- **SKIN-TO-SKIN:** Spend as much time “skin-to-skin”, sometimes called kangaroo care, with your baby when you are awake. This helps your baby eat and sleep better, and will help calm your baby. It can also help decrease other symptoms of withdrawal. It also helps your milk supply when breastfeeding. Both parents are able to do skin-to-skin.
- **CUDDLES:** Hold your baby or swaddle your baby in a light blanket. Just being close to someone, or “tucked” in a swaddle, helps your baby feel safe and comfortable. Please let us know if you need to have someone help take care of your baby for a little bit to help you get some needed rest as well.
- **CALM AND QUIET:** Keep your room calm and quiet with the lights down low. Wear headphones if you want to watch TV/videos. Have quiet conversations with your partner and visitors.
- **LISTEN:** Listen for when baby starts to wake up. Try to start baby’s feed before they get really upset. Plan to feed your baby every 3 to 4 hours and sometimes more if that’s what baby needs.
- **SOOTHERS:** If your baby still wants to suck after a feeding, offer a soother (pacifier) to suck on. If you’re breastfeeding sometimes that can console baby too. Always make sure your baby is not hungry first.
- **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:** It is important for you to also take care of your mental and physical health. Ask for help from staff or family if you need food, breaks, or any other support.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY BABY DOES NEED MEDICINE?

We will give your baby medicine to help if they are having trouble eating, sleeping, or consoling. Some babies only need 1 or 2 doses, and others will need to have it every 4 hours for a few weeks until they are feeling better. Even if your baby needs medicine, they still need you to care for them.

Try to have at least one or two family members who can support you and bring you food, give you a break, and bring you clothing and toiletries.

Sometimes it is hard to talk about why your baby needs to stay in the hospital. Your nurse, doctor, midwife, or hospital social worker can help you talk to family if you'd like.

WHEN CAN I TAKE MY BABY HOME?

Your baby's doctor, nurse, or midwife will help decide when you will be able to go home. Your baby will need to be at least 24 hours without needing any medicine. The nurse will also need to see you caring for baby for at least 24 hours without needing a lot of nurse support to eat, sleep, and console baby.



RESOURCES



Northern Health virtual
perinatal substance clinic



Northern Health pregnancy
and baby webpage collection



Mental health and substance
use services listed by city



Northern Health mental health
and substance use resources



Northern Health overdose
prevention info and resources



northern health
the northern way of caring



#HealthyNorth

northernhealth.ca