

What can I do?

We know that you are the most important person to help your baby adjust to life after birth. Be with your baby as much as possible! We like to think of the parents being the primary treatment for babies at risk of NAS. Being with your baby helps you learn your baby's cues so you can respond quickly to your baby's needs. Your baby will be most comfortable and feel safest when they are close to you.

Spending as much time skin-to-skin and keeping your baby swaddled when not skin-to-skin can help keep your baby calm and help them sleep better.

Keep the room calm, quiet, with the lights down low and limit visitors.

Feed your baby whenever your baby is hungry and until they are content, no longer than 3 hours. We encourage breastfeeding if possible. We will support you however you choose to feed your baby.

Allow your baby to suck after a good feeding. This can be very comforting for them.

Eat, Sleep, Console uses the Moms over Medicine (MOMS) model. You are the treatment for your baby.

When will we go home?

The length of time you spend in hospital with your baby will depend on their withdrawal symptoms, and their overall well-being. For example, how well they are eating and if their weight loss or gain is within normal range. Some babies are ready to go home earlier than others, but it can take up to 5 days or longer until they are ready. If possible, plan to stay with your baby as much as you can.



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Eat, Sleep, Console

Supporting infants at risk of withdrawal

Eat, Sleep, Console Approach

What is Eat, Sleep, Console?

Eat, Sleep, Console (ESC) is a method to help care for your baby. This method is used for babies who are at risk for Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). ESC emphasizes how well your baby is eating, sleeping and their ability to be consoled.

What is Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome?

NAS occurs when a baby is withdrawing from certain substances they were exposed to during pregnancy or after birth. The most common substances used during pregnancy that lead to NAS are opioids (methadone buprenorphine, fentanyl or other pain medicines). Symptoms in your baby typically occur by day 5 of life.

What will NAS look like in my baby?

NAS may look slightly different in each baby. The most common signs of NAS include:

- Tremors, jitteriness, shaking of the arms and legs
- Tight muscles in the arms and legs
- Fussiness
- Trouble eating or sleeping
- Difficult to console or calm down
- Loose or watery stools
- Losing too much weight or not gaining enough weight

Eat, Sleep, Console (ESC) provides a framework to help guide your baby's treatment team and you to make decision about how best to care for your baby.

Using this method, we will watch your baby closely for signs of withdrawal. We check in every few hours to see how your baby is eating, sleeping and being consoled. We also will check in with you to see what types of thing help your baby be consoled the most. This includes things like holding, skin-to-skin contact, swaddling, suckling, a calm room, and other things you may have found comfort your baby.

Depending on how your baby is doing in each of these categories, we may recommend starting medication to help your baby be more comfortable.

We will always work to keep you and your baby together

What happens if my baby needs medications?

The ESC approach has decreased the number of babies who require medication for NAS. However, some babies will still need a little extra help. Babies who need medicine will be treated with morphine. If your baby requires morphine, they will be monitored closely in the NICU. During this time, you are more than welcome (and encouraged) to be with your baby. It may take a few days to find the right amount of morphine for your baby.

Eating: What is Normal?

Most babies eat at least 8-12 times (and sometimes more often) in 24 hours, and it's normal for them to need to eat at night. Your baby should be fed whenever they show signs of being hungry, such as opening their mouths, sucking their hands, turning their head towards you. Some babies need extra support to get started. Whether you breastfeed, or bottle feed (or both), your nurses will help you.

Sleeping: What is Expected?

Babies tend to sleep for short periods of time. Ideally, your baby will sleep for at least 1 hour between feeds. Sometimes they sleep better when being held. If you feel tired, have someone else hold the baby or lay them down in their bassinette, this is safer than sleeping with your baby. You will get to know what your baby prefers, and use what works best for both of you.

