



# Parent Blocks

NEWSLETTER



“Providing resources to parents throughout West Virginia”

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## Caring for Substance Exposed Babies

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Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome/ NAS is a medical term used to describe a set of symptoms of a newborn going through substance withdrawal. Exposure to many drugs in utero can pass through mom’s placenta to the baby. These may include nicotine, alcohol, cocaine, heroin, LSD, anti-depressants, crystal meth etc. Opioid (morphine, pain medications) exposure to unborn fetus can result in NOWS/ Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome.

Babies exposed to opioids seem to have more symptoms and more severe symptoms. Doctors may use the Finnigan Scale to rate the newborn baby’s withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms may include:

- Low birth weight
- Diarrhea/vomiting
- High pitched crying
- Seizures/ tremors
- Hyperactive reflexes

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- Poor feeding
- Difficulty with sleeping
- Irritability
- Rapid heartbeat
- Excessive sudden movements
- Easily Frustrated
- Moro Reflex
- Difficult to console
- Delay with motor development
- Impaired social skills
- Poor self-regulation

The “Eat, Sleep, Console” Model is an evidence-based method of care that helps new moms care for their infant who may have been exposed to substances. The model provides family-centered care. This enables mom and baby to stay together so babies can feed on demand and be rocked and cuddled as much as possible.

Eat: Is the baby feeding normally?

Sleep: Is the baby able to sleep between feedings?

Console: Can the baby be consoled/comforted within 10 minutes of crying?

Sometimes medical treatment may be needed. This includes:

- Anti-seizure medication
- IV fluids due to diarrhea and dehydration
- Higher calorie formula
- Sensitive formula due to GI concerns
- Oral morphine, oral methadone or Subutex when baby cannot

tolerate routine care by nurses (Nurses monitor vital signs, sleep, eating and behavior and gradually wean off).

Caring for babies experiencing NAS requires additional awareness and care, particularly regarding feeding, sleeping, and soothing.

### Feeding

Smaller and more frequent feedings are recommended for babies experiencing NAS due to difficulty feeding because of poor latch, uncoordinated suck and swallow patterns, the baby needing to pause and breathe between swallows that can lead to air/gas build up, and long feeding sessions.

Good bottle suggestions include:

- Dr. Brown’s Natural Flow Bottles which includes an internal vent system to provide a natural slow flow to help reduce gas, spit-up and colic.
- Tommee Tippee Advanced Anti-Colic Bottle, this wider bottle may be easier to clean and comes in a set of 2-8 ounces.

Prior to feeding, swaddle the baby to minimize external stimulus. This will help the baby relax and prevent auto-stimulation (Moro reflex). It may also help to dim the lighting and feed the baby in a quiet environment.

### Sleeping

Swaddling the baby provides comfort and calm and prevents flailing arms, providing a “womb” like support.

Suggestions for swaddling include:

- Muslin swaddle - you can fold yourself
- The Swaddle Me sleep sack - thin, breathable fabric making it ideal if the baby becomes hot and sweats a lot, which is a common occurrence with substance-exposed babies.
- HALO sleep sack - wider at the bottom for more leg movement.
- Merlin Suit - weighted sleep suit

Other considerations for sleep may include:

- Cuddling, which stimulates the brain development and bonding
- Elevating the baby’s head during sleep to help with better breathing and digestion
- Using a humidifier to ease respiratory concerns and autonomic dysfunction, which can lead to congestion and coughing (Geniani is highly rated on Amazon)
- Using saline spray and a bulb syringe to clear nasal passages
- Using a pacifier. Due to excessive sucking when experiencing withdrawals, the baby may develop blisters on their knuckles and hands. A good pacifier can prevent this. It also

helps the baby self-soothe due to rhythmic sucking. Tommee Tippee Nighttime Pacifier has a great shape for a little one's mouth and has a glow-in-the-dark handle.

- Using a white noise machine or Baby Shusher Sleep Miracle Soother, which plays a low, rhythmic shushing sound in response to baby's cry to help him engage his natural calming reflex.
- Using a vibrating mattress pad such as Munchkin Lulla-Vibe- This pad can be placed under the crib mattress for gentle vibrations to lull the baby to sleep.

### Sensitive Skin Care

Loose stools or diarrhea due to withdrawals and toxins can lead to diaper rash. A substance exposed baby's skin is 30 percent thinner and retains more moisture in the diaper area causing severe rash. Because of this, it is important to:

- Do frequent diaper changes (every 1-3 hours)
- Use super absorbent diapers
- Use dry wipes moistened with sterile water (such as Medline UltraSoft Dry Cleansing Wipes)
- Apply a thick layer of diaper cream: Aquaphor and Desitin Maximum Strength (purple box) for mild to moderate rash, or Marathon Liquid Skin Protectant for more severe cases (prescrip-

tion from doctor required)

- Calmoseptine Ointment available on Amazon.

For babies experiencing eczema, you may try Aveeno Baby Eczema Therapy to reduce irritation and itching.

### Consoling

There are several calming strategies that you can use including,

- Skin-to-skin contact
- Gentle massage
- Rocking baby
- Swaying the baby in arms
- Hold baby with rhythmic bouncing (up and down)
- Baby Carrier- Moby Wrap (0-36 months)
- Low stimulation
- Cuddling

Swings can also help in soothing a baby. Swings provide slow linear vestibular movement for calming input.

Or try a Mamaroo, which allows you to program different movements to help provide rhythmic vestibular input, adjust the speeds, and choose white noise.

Another choice is the Fisher Price Rock 'n Play, which provides incline seating and vibration for calming input.

Try to remain calm so your baby does not feed off your anxiety:

- Take deep breaths
- Keep a low voice
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Attend support groups

Believe in yourself and your precious little one! You can do this!!!

### Citations

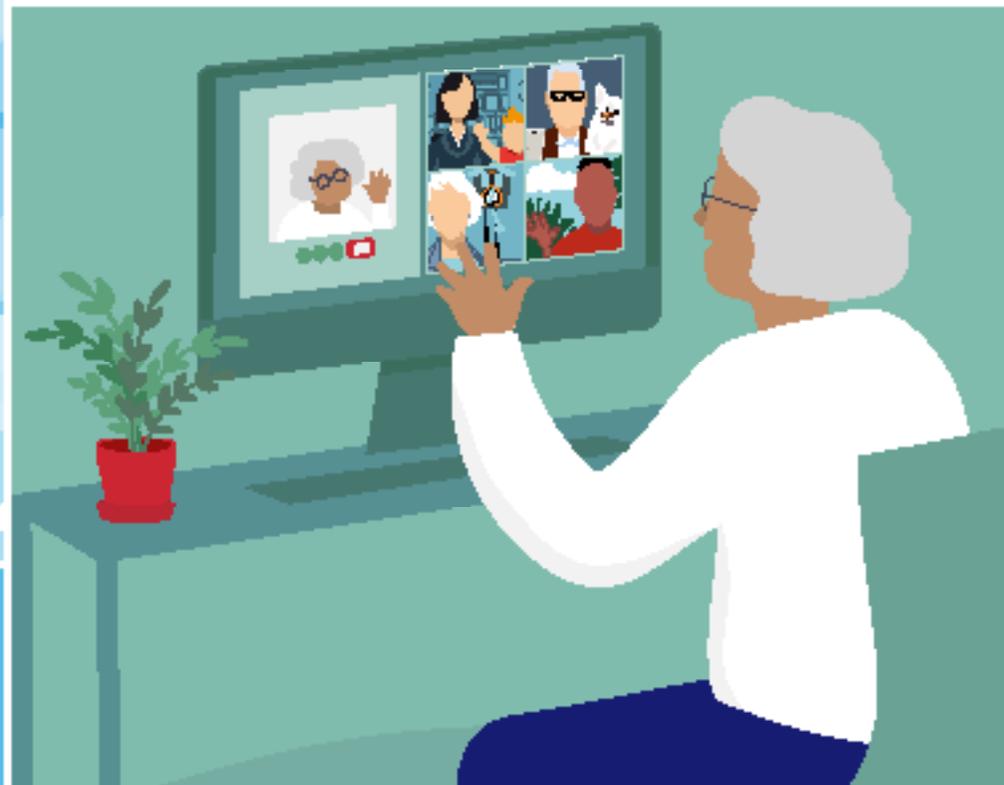
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# Care for yourself one small way each day

Find new ways to safely connect with family and friends, get support, and share feelings



Take breaks to relax and unwind through yoga, music, gardening, or new hobbies

Treat yourself to healthy foods and get enough sleep



Take care of your body and get moving to lessen fatigue, anxiety, or sadness



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Disaster Distress Hotline: call or text 1-800-985-5990

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)