



Resources

# Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome



## About NOWS

Up to 94% of babies exposed to opioids during pregnancy may have drug withdrawal when they are born if their mothers used drugs while pregnant.

When babies withdraw from pain pills it is called Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome, or NOWS. Opioid use and NOWS has doubled since 2009.

## What is NOWS?

Symptoms caused by withdrawal from pain pills or drugs.

Common pain pills include Vicodin, Percocet, Methadone, Norco, Subutex, Suboxone, Oxycodone, and Heroin.

Most babies exposed to these drugs during pregnancy will have some withdrawal symptoms. And 94% may require treatment.

### Symptoms of NOWS

Fussiness	Difficulty feeding
Jitteriness	Stiff arms, legs and back
Difficulty sleeping	Vomiting
Sneezing	Loose stools and diarrhea
Yawning	Fast breathing
Seizures	High pitched cry

## Caring for your Newborn

NOWS symptoms may continue after leaving the hospital, but will decrease over time.

### Prolonged Crying

- Skin to skin contact
- Hold baby close to your body
- Decrease loud noises, bright lights
- Humming, singing, gentle rocking
- Cradle board or Indian swing

### Sleeplessness

- Reduce noise, bright lights
- Soft gentle music, rocking
- Swaddling
- Feed on demand

### Excessive Sucking

- Cover hands with mittens
- Avoid lotions
- Pacifier use

### Difficult or poor feeding

- Frequent small feedings
- Quiet, calm surroundings
- Breast feeding

### Sneezing, stuffy nose

- Keep nose and mouth clean
- Feed baby slowly
- Keep baby in semi-sitting position, well supported and supervised
- Place baby on back to sleep

GiiZhaaway Nii Miin  
"I Love You"

# Caring for your Newborn

## When to call a doctor

- Baby's signs of withdrawal get worse
- Baby is not eating
- Baby is having diarrhea or vomiting
- Baby is unable to be consoled

## When to call for Emergency Help

Call 911 for emergency help if:

- Baby has a seizure
- Baby stops breathing or turns blue



Babies with NOWS are at higher risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), reduce the risk by:

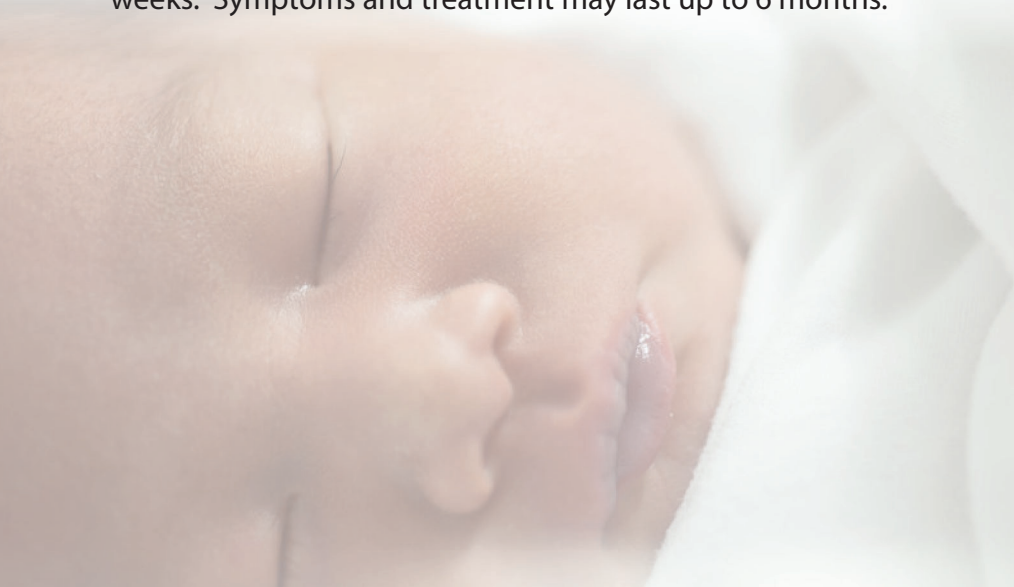
- Placing baby to sleep on back on a firm bed, no soft toys or bedding
- Don't smoke around baby
- Breastfed and Immunize if possible

## When do babies get NOWS?

Babies with NOWS can develop symptoms at different times depending on:

- What mother was taking
- How much and how often the mother was taking
- Whether other drugs or substances were being taken at the same time including alcohol and tobacco.

Symptoms can start 24-96 hours after birth. Babies with NOWS symptoms will be observed in the hospital for 3-4 days. If treatment is required, babies can be hospitalized for two to four weeks. Symptoms and treatment may last up to 6 months.



***If you are pregnant, it is important NOT to suddenly stop using opioid drugs or medications. This could lead to the baby having withdrawal before birth and could cause a miscarriage or preterm labor.***



## Support for Pregnant Women

The Red Lake Hospital is focused on providing compassionate, non-judgmental prenatal care for pregnant women. We are here to support you.

## Prenatal Care

Prenatal care can help keep you and your baby healthy. Babies of mothers who do not get prenatal care are three times more likely to have a low birth weight and five times more likely to die than those born to mothers who do get care. Doctors can spot health problems early when they see mothers regularly. This allows doctors to treat them early. Early treatment can cure many problems and prevent others. Prenatal care should be established as early in pregnancy as possible. Doctors also can talk to pregnant women about things they can do to give their babies a healthy start to life — including a referral to treatment programs for substance use in pregnancy.

## Addiction Treatment

If you are using substances we will help you get information regarding potential treatment programs and help you contact Chemical Health. Pregnant women are the highest priority for placement into a treatment program and there are several options available including methadone and buprenorphine

## Support for your Newborn

Babies with moderate to severe NOWS sometimes need treatment to control withdrawal symptoms. Medications such as morphine or methadone can be used. They also may need help to grow and bond with their family. Normal growth and bonding with family are both important for brain development.

## Treating NOWS

Supportive Care	Medicine (examples)
Swaddling	Morphine
Quiet Calm Room	Methadone
Small frequent feedings	Clonidine
Rocking	Phenobarbital



## Breast Feeding

- Best way to feed your baby
- Improves bonding with baby
- May help with babies withdrawal symptoms

**Not recommended if mother is still taking illegal substances as these do pass through the breast milk to the baby. Breast feeding is still highly recommended if mother is enrolled in a treatment program and prescribed buprenorphine or methadone.**