



**Saint Vincent
Hospital**

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Plan of Care

As parents, you are the most important part of your baby's life and you are important to our care team. Your baby has been admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) or is staying in the hospital for evaluation because he/she is experiencing withdrawal symptoms. While in the hospital your baby will be treated with comfort measures and possibly medication(s). Babies need to stay in the NICU until we are safely able to stop these medications. Symptoms may persist for several weeks even with medications and babies will continue to need extra comfort care at home for several months. Please understand that every baby in the NICU needs treatment and care specific to their health care needs. Therefore, your baby may have a different schedule, medicine regimen, and care plan than other babies sharing the same diagnosis.

As a part of the team it is important for you to know your role and contributions to your baby's care. Certain limitations and guidelines must be followed closely so that your baby can get better. These guidelines are included in this agreement and following them will help ensure the best possible care. We understand that withdrawal is a sensitive issue and will make sure to maintain your privacy. We will not discuss your baby's information and updates without you at the bedside. If you do not want withdrawal to be discussed when you have visitors, be sure to let a staff member know. We want to make sure that you understand the plan of care for your child, so please feel free to ask questions at any time.

1. We encourage you to be at the bedside for feedings and to participate in your baby's care as much as possible. Since we generally feed on demand and not on a schedule, it is important that you let the nurse know when you think you will be visiting, please provide us with a phone number to reach you. Once an infant wakes, we try to feed within 15 minutes to prevent the baby from getting too upset. Please know that if your baby is distressed, due to hunger, we may need to feed before you arrive. If you arrive after a feeding you may still hold and comfort/care for your baby.
2. Breastfeeding is the recommended form of nutrition for your newborn. For babies with NAS, breastfeeding or providing Expressed Breast Milk (EBM) may be better tolerated with less spitting, gas, and loose stools which may decrease your baby's symptoms. There are circumstances in which breastfeeding may NOT be recommended, depending on some medications and some medical conditions that mom is experiencing. Your baby's doctor will make you aware if this is the situation and then we will be able to provide a suitable formula for your babies' nutritional needs.
If you are breastfeeding and you have a change in medication or dosage it is especially important for you to notify the NICU staff.
3. Babies experiencing withdrawal typically have an excessive need to suck which is not related to hunger. Your baby will be given a pacifier to satisfy his/her non-nutritive sucking needs.



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Sucking may help him/her relax and soothe, thereby helping to reduce crying and leading to better rest/sleep periods. This may help to reduce NAS symptoms.

4. Babies with NAS are extremely sensitive to stimuli in their environment. Please speak in quiet voices and limit the number of visitors. This will help to ensure your baby's sleep and decrease distress from over-stimulation. Even if the baby appears to be sleeping, visitors and stimulation at the bedside over the course of the day can disrupt their sleep pattern. We also encourage dim lighting and soft music at times. Please refrain from using your cell phone to make phone calls at the bedside, and if you must do so, please do not use the speakerphone setting.

Our goal is to provide a quiet, caring, respectful environment for you and your baby, as well as the hospital staff. Please be mindful that inappropriate language or behavior in the hospital is unacceptable.

5. All babies are very sensitive to smells. Strong smells such as perfume, body odor, alcohol, and cigarette smoke are irritants to them. Cigarette smoke in clothing is considered second hand smoke and is known to be a health hazard. Please shower and wear clean clothes when visiting your baby. If you do smoke, you will be asked to wear a gown over your clothes.
6. Babies with NAS often feel more secure and comfortable when they are tightly swaddled with their hands under their chin, but at the same time we do not want to overheat them. In order to maintain consistency in your baby's temperature, which can affect their scores and their comfort, your baby may only need to be in a onesie and swaddle blanket or sack. Your baby may also be placed in an infant swing at times.
7. We understand that infant bonding is extremely important and want to encourage bonding time with your baby when you are able to visit. We also encourage parents to have long visiting time periods of 1 hour or more as this helps to provide your baby with enough time to soothe and sleep well. NAS babies have difficulty sleeping well and self-soothing; agitation and lack of sleep leads to increased NAS scores and stress. Please use your best judgement and limit touching, stroking, picking up and holding when the baby is sleeping unless you are going to be able to stay. If you cannot stay and your baby is sleeping, you can help your baby by being quiet at their bedside and available to hold when they awaken.
8. Our goal is to provide a quiet, caring, respectful environment for you and your baby, as well as the hospital staff. Please be mindful that inappropriate language or behavior in the hospital is unacceptable and will result in removal from the unit. Due to safety risks, anyone known or



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suspected to be intoxicated or under the influence will not be permitted in the NICU or maternity floor.

Please keep us updated on any changes in your phone numbers; it is important that we can reach you. Please let the staff know if you would like to speak with our Social Worker, Nurse Manager, or to a Physician during day light hours. As always, your baby's nurse will be glad to provide you with updates and changes in your baby's care or status on a daily basis.

9. **Medicine for Withdrawal Symptoms:** Comfort measures can help your baby cope with withdrawal symptoms, but some babies need medicine too. To decide if your baby needs medicine, we use the Finnegan Scoring Tool to rate your baby's symptoms. We score all of the symptoms and add them up; this is their Finnegan Score which is also called their NAS score. The Finnegan Score helps us decide:

- If your baby needs medicine
- How much medicine to give your baby
- When your baby needs less medicine
- When the medicine can be stopped

The Finnegan (NAS) Scoring Tool is used many times a day. The best times to score your baby's symptoms are with a feeding and when the baby is quiet and resting.

10. **How long will my baby need medicine for withdrawal?**

The amount of medicine will be slowly reduced over time until your baby no longer needs medicine for the withdrawal symptoms. This is called weaning.

Weaning can continue as long as your baby continues to have low Finnegan (NAS) Scores.

Weaning can take several weeks. We will observe your baby for 1-2 days after the medication is stopped as needed before discharged.