

Newborns in Withdrawal in the NICU: Care Agreement for Family Members

All newborns need consistent, loving care. But a newborn in withdrawal is particularly sensitive and needs particularly sensitive care. This handout explains what you and your family members can do to help provide this care in the NICU. Please read it and sign on the bottom to show you understand the information and agree to help us provide excellent care to your baby.

Please visit often — but help us keep things calm.

Your baby will feel comforted by your quiet presence at the bedside. **If you can commit to coming to the hospital at a regular time, please share this schedule with the NICU staff.** This helps the medical team plan and provide care.

While you're here in the NICU, please do these things to help your baby:

- **Get centered.** Since babies in withdrawal can be jittery and fussy, it helps if you're calm. Take deep breaths and try to radiate comfort and security.
- **Talk before touch.** Use a soft, calm voice to greet your baby before you touch him or her.
- **Turn it down.** Help create a soothing environment by keeping the lights low — and music and voices soft.
- **Stick to a schedule.** Establish a routine of feedings, diaper changes, and so on.
- **Respond calmly and immediately to your baby.** It's easier to soothe a baby who's just starting to fuss, rather than one who has escalated into a full-blown upset.
- **Be gentle and firm.** When you hold your baby, use firm pressure — your baby will find this reassuring and soothing. Encourage your baby's hand-to-mouth sucking or use of a pacifier ("binky").
- **Hold your baby skin-to-skin.** Holding your baby closely, with your bare chests touching, can relax both of you.



To help your baby recover as quickly as possible, please follow these guidelines in the NICU.

- **When you put your baby back down in the crib, position your baby's body** on its side, tucked slightly into a C-position with the legs tilted up at the hip. Use firm, gentle pressure to place and hold your baby in this C-shaped curl. The weight of your hand and your baby's own body can help with relaxation.
- **Swaddle your baby.** Your baby's caregivers can show you how to do this with a blanket. Swaddling helps newborns feel safe and in control of their bodies.
- **Keep movements slow and rhythmic.** When you're holding your baby, try swaying in figure-eight pattern, following the line of head-to-toe.

To help my baby rest and recover,

I _____, agree to follow the guidelines described in this handout.

