

My baby is at risk of withdrawal

How to take care of my baby



Congratulations on your baby! The purpose of this health sheet is to:

- explain to you what withdrawal is
- help you care for your baby
- inform you about the hospital stay

What is neonatal withdrawal?

Neonatal withdrawal is a reaction **some** babies may have after birth. In the hospital, it's also called neonatal abstinence syndrome.

This reaction occurs when the baby has been in contact with certain substances during pregnancy, such as medications, alcohol, or drugs. After birth, the baby's body has to get used to living **without** these substances. This is why it's referred to as withdrawal.

How will I know if my baby will be in withdrawal?

We can't know before the birth. The baby's withdrawal often depends on **what substance** the mother consumed during pregnancy. For example, the baby is likely to have a stronger reaction to opioids.

What will happen after the birth?

Shared room

If your baby's health allows, you'll be together in the same room at the Birthing Centre. Otherwise, your baby will be in a room in the Neonatal Unit. But you'll be able to see your baby at all times.



Caring for your baby

The hospital team will:

- support you to help you care for your baby
- monitor your baby's health
- do whatever it takes to make your baby feel better as soon as possible



What are the signs of withdrawal?

The signs often occur between the **2nd and 7th day of the baby's life**. The care team will talk to you about these signs. They'll help you recognize them.

Your newborn may have one or more of these signs:

- cries a lot
- doesn't sleep for more than an hour at a time
- has difficulty breastfeeding or bottle feeding
- takes more than 10 minutes to start feeding
- has a tense and stiff body
- moves the whole body a lot with small, sudden movements
- has a blocked nose and sneezes
- yawns often
- breathes fast
- has a fever and sweats
- has diarrhea or vomits



What can I do to help my baby?

Your presence is the best way to soothe your baby. The presence of a loved one or a caring adult can also do a lot of good. **Human presence reassures the baby.**



Here are some tips:

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin, that is, without a shirt so that the baby feels the warmth of your skin.

- Let your baby sleep, an important need.
- Feed your baby on demand, at the breast or by bottle.
 - Breastfeeding is sometimes not advisable. Ask your doctor if you can breastfeed.
 - Your baby may need milk with more calories. If this is the case, your care team will tell you what to do.
- Make sure your baby's room is calm, with minimal light and noise.

To make sure you feel **ready to go home**, you'll meet with health professionals: a nutritionist, a social worker, a nurse, and a lactation consultant. Use page 4 to keep track of who you meet.

When can my baby be discharged from the hospital?

If all goes well, your baby will be able to leave the hospital with you after a few days. In some cases, **the baby may need to stay longer than you.**

This is often the case for babies who are in withdrawal from long-acting opioids, such as buprenorphine or methadone. The baby must then stay in the hospital for at least **5 to 7 days, even if there are no withdrawal symptoms.**

The baby will then be cared for in the Neonatal Unit. Parents can be with their newborn whenever they want. They can even sleep in the baby's room.

The baby can go home when no longer on medication and:

- is feeding well
- is sleeping well
- can be soothed

What should I expect when I get home?

Usually, when babies leave the hospital, they have become calm. But it's possible that some signs are still present and that your baby:

- cries often
- sleeps little and wakes up often
- has trouble feeding

Continue to reassure your baby, as you did in the hospital. Over time, these reactions will gradually go away.



Your home: a new place

Your baby's reactions won't just be related to withdrawal. The hospital is the only place the baby has known since birth.

In your home, everything will be different: sounds, light, smells, etc. Like all babies, yours may react to this change in the first few days.

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

Caring for a baby in withdrawal takes a lot of energy. If you need help or are worried about your baby's health, call:

- The CHUM Perinatal Clinic:
☎ **514 890-8000, ext. 36396**
- The CHUM Neonatal Unit:
☎ **514 890-8412**
(24 hours a day,
7 days a week)



If your baby isn't breathing or is breathing poorly:
Call 911



USEFUL RESOURCES

The guide From Tiny Tot to Toddler:
inspq.qc.ca/en/tiny-tot

You, Me, Baby (to promote the well-being of new parents):
toimoibebe.ca/en/

To learn more about pregnancy, childbirth or follow-up, visit our website, where you will find videos, other health sheets, and more (in French):



centredesnaissanceschum.com

The content of this document in no way replaces the advice of your healthcare professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca



Key contacts	Name	Phone number
Nutritionist		
Social worker		
Nurse		
Lactation consultant		
CLSC		
Other (_____)		
Other (_____)		



Questions

Write down any questions you want to ask your care team so you don't forget anything.

