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INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

NEONATAL ABSTINENCE SYNDROME

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This leaflet aims to give information and advice helping parents prepare for the arrival of their newborn baby.

Will my baby have withdrawal?

Withdrawal symptoms may occur following the use of -

- **Opiate drugs (Methadone, heroin, dihydrocodeine & buprenorphine)**
- **Benzodiazepines (Valium, diazepam, temazepam)**
- **Heavy alcohol use**

Withdrawal symptoms are rarely seen in babies born to mothers who have used stimulants (crack/cocaine/ amphetamines) or have used cannabis.

Symptoms usually start 24 hours after birth and may last up to two weeks. However it has been known for withdrawal symptoms to start a few weeks after birth especially with methadone.

If baby has shown minimal symptoms 4 days after birth it is unusual for withdrawal to be severe.

For this reason you will be advised to remain in hospital with your baby for about 4 days.

Signs of withdrawal

- Irritability
- High pitched cry
- Tremor or twitching
- Difficulty in feeding
- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- Sore red bottom due to frequent dirty nappies
- Feeding difficulties
- Poor weight gain / weight loss

Assessing signs of withdrawal

During your stay on the postnatal ward mums are expected to care for their baby at all times. Mums and babies are not separated unless absolutely necessary.

Withdrawal symptoms in babies can be similar to other conditions and medical problems therefore it is important for medical staff to perform a thorough assessment of your baby, this will be done by your midwife or a baby doctor.

The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a cot in your room for the first 6 months

To help prevent nappy rash and sores apply a barrier cream around the baby's bottom

What you can do to help your baby

Help your baby to feel comfortable, safe and warm.

Keep the baby in a dimly lit quiet environment.

Skin to skin contact can help if your baby is difficult to settle. To do this remove baby's clothes leaving the nappy in place and cuddle baby next to your naked chest - underneath your nightie. Blankets can then be placed over baby if required.

Breastfeeding

If your drug use is stable then the benefits from breast feeding for you and baby outweigh the risk of hazards to baby. For more information on breast-feeding talk to your midwife or the Specialist Midwife in Drugs and Alcohol.