



Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) and Breastfeeding

Information for Families and Providers

Questions regarding the safety of breastfeeding infants often arise when a mother is using medications or substances that can cause withdrawal or neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). The benefits of breastfeeding, however, may outweigh risks for infants with NAS.

When Breastfeeding Can Be Supported. Information about long-term outcomes for infants exposed to medications/drugs in breast milk is limited and there may be negative effects of drug exposures. However, because of the known benefits of breast milk for infants and breastfeeding for mothers, with guidance we support breastfeeding for infants when mothers are on the following:

- * Methadone as part of a drug treatment program
- * Buprenorphine (e.g., Suboxone, Subutex) as part of a drug treatment program
- * Benzodiazepines (e.g., clonazepam/lorazepam, etc.) (prescribed)
- * Pain medications (prescribed)

When Breastfeeding is Discouraged. We discourage breastfeeding/providing breast milk for infants whose mothers have recently taken (within last 12 weeks) the following:

- * Opiates/opioids not prescribed by a provider
- * Heroin
- * Cocaine
- * Amphetamines (unprescribed)
- * Phencyclidine (PCP)
- * Marijuana (THC) (prescribed or unprescribed)

Discussing the Benefits and Risks of Breastfeeding. We recommend that mothers and clinicians discuss the benefits and risks of breastfeeding whenever mothers are on medications or other substances.

- * Ideally, this conversation will occur before delivery. We recommend that obstetricians offer parents a neonatology consultation as part of prenatal care if their infants will be at risk for NAS.
- * If no consultation has occurred before delivery, and a mother wishes to breastfeed, we recommend that staff support the initiation of breastfeeding infants at risk for NAS if the following conditions are met:
 - mother is documented as HIV-negative. A rapid test can be sent if this has not been done during the antepartum.
 - or
 - there are no positive toxicology screens upon admission to labor and delivery or during the prior 12 week period for cocaine, heroin, unprescribed amphetamines, PCP or a non-prescribed opiate/opioid.

Breastfeeding while using other substances/medications is beyond the scope of this document. We recommend that mothers and providers discuss all substances /medications used during breastfeeding. This includes prescription and non-prescription medications, alcohol, other substances or a combination of medications. We recommend that all smoking mothers quit, if possible, or at a minimum reduce their intakes.