Caring for Babies Who Have Been Exposed to Drugs or Alcohol

Some tips for soothing your baby during challenging times

Resources

Here are some places you can go for more information and support for you and your baby:

- **Sacramento Crisis nursery**: Offers support and a safe temporary place for children ages 0-5 to stay in times of family stress and crisis. Offers emergency childcare from 7 am to 7 pm seven days a week, and 24-hour shelter up to 30 days.
  - North Sacramento: (916) 679-3600; South Sacramento: (916) 394-2000

- **Mercy Perinatal Recovery Network – A program of hope and recovery**
  - Children Enrichment Center (916) 614-2240

- **WarmLine Family Resource Center**: (916) 922-9276 or (800) 660-7995

- **Alta Regional Center**: (916) 978-6249

- **Sacramento County Office of Education – Infant Development Program**: (916) 643-9163

- **Sacramento County AOD Services**: (916) 874-9754

- **Sacramento County Child Protective Services**: (916) 875-0189

Contact Us

Nurse Family Partnership
9616 Micron Ave Suite 950
Sacramento CA 95827
(916) 875-7911
Caring for any new baby can be challenging, but babies who were exposed to drugs or alcohol in the womb may have some additional challenges. They may cry a lot, be hard to soothe or have trouble eating and sleeping. This doesn’t mean you’re a bad parent. It just means your baby may need some extra care and attention.

- The most important thing any parent can do is to provide a safe, stable and loving home for the baby to grow and develop. This includes: listening to your baby and responding to his/her needs. Is he/she hungry, wet, cold, needing comfort?

- Responding quickly when your baby is crying. This helps your baby learn to trust and feel safe.

- Having regular check-ups with your baby’s doctor.

- Taking care of yourself, managing your own stress and asking for help if you feel overwhelmed or too tired.

Your baby will “talk” to you by using his/her face, body and voice. He might cry, smile, pull away, or tense his body when he wants to tell you if he likes or doesn’t like something. With time, you will learn what your baby’s needs are by watching her body and seeing what calms and comforts her.

Caregiving Tips

Here are some steps you can take to calm your baby when he/she is crying:

- **Bundle or swaddle your baby**
  - Wrap him/her snugly in a blanket to control movements and provide comfort

- **Have a quiet and stable environment for your baby**
  - Use a calm, soothing voice
  - Keep the lights turned down low
  - Keep your baby from being too hot or too cold
  - Avoid loud noises (turn off the television and loud music)

- **Keep the same routine for your baby**
  - Have a set bed time and feeding time

- **Try soothing activities (one at a time) with your baby**
  - Gently rock or bounce your baby with a slow rhythmic movement—being careful to never shake him/her
  - Massage your baby with light, gentle, soothing touch
  - Bathe your baby in a warm bath and then lightly apply lotion on your baby’s body
  - Reduce activity levels before bedtime

- **Be patient and take care of yourself**
  - With time, you will discover what works best for your individual baby.

- **If at all possible, limit the number of caregivers.**
  - Drug exposed infants do best with consistent care and familiar faces.