

Caring for Babies Who Have Been Exposed to Substances



TIPS TO CARE FOR YOUR BABY

Your baby may have extra needs if exposed to substances like drugs or alcohol in the womb. Your baby may cry a lot, be hard to calm or have trouble eating and sleeping. This doesn't mean you're a bad parent or caregiver. It just means your baby may need some extra care and support. The most important thing for your baby is to have a safe, stable, and loving home.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- ✓ Listen and respond to his or her needs. Is your baby hungry, wet, cold, needing comfort?
- ✓ Respond quickly when your baby is crying. This helps him or her learn to trust and feel safe.
- ✓ Take your baby to the doctor for regular check-ups.
- ✓ Follow doctor's orders, including giving medications as prescribed.
- ✓ Limit the number of people who care for your baby. Babies exposed to substances do better with the same people and faces they know.
- ✓ Be patient. With time, you will learn your baby's needs and what calms and comforts your baby.
- ✓ Watch your baby's face and body and listen to his or her voice. This is how your baby "talks" to you:
 - If your baby is happy, he or she might smile, laugh, or coo.
 - If your baby is unhappy, he or she might pull away, tense his or her body, or cry.

WHEN YOUR BABY IS CRYING

- ✓ **Make sure he or she feels warm and safe.**
 - Wrap safely and snugly (swaddle) in a blanket to control movements and provide comfort.
 - Stop swaddling as soon as your baby begins to roll over.
- ✓ **Make the environment quiet and stable.**
 - 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 TV and loud music).
- ✓ **Try calming activities (one at a time)**
 - Gently rock or bounce with slow and steady movements but be careful to never shake him or her.
 - Massage with light, gentle, soothing touch.
 - Bathe in a warm bath and then lightly put lotion on your baby's body.

TO HELP YOUR BABY STAY CALM AND HAPPY

- ✓ **Keep the same routine.**
 - Put your baby to bed at the same time every night.
 - Try to do the same things each night before bedtime.
 - Reduce activity levels before bedtime.
 - When possible, feed at the same times each day, but also respond when he or she seems hungry.
- ✓ **Take care of yourself**
 - Ask for help from family or friends, especially if you feel tired or feel like you have too much to do.
 - Try to exercise and eat foods that are good for you.
 - Get as much rest as possible.