



# BETTER TOGETHER TO PREVENT NEONATAL OPIOID WITHDRAWAL SYNDROME #bettertogether

We're **Better Together** when it comes to preventing **Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS)**. The entire community can play a role in supporting pregnant women and mothers who are dependent on opioids, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, hospitals, addiction treatment facilities, law enforcement, courts, families, churches, caregivers, pregnant women and mothers. Together we can help pregnant women and mothers struggling with opioid addiction to get connected to the right treatment and resources for a safer, healthier outcome for both mother and baby.

**ABOUT NEONATAL OPIOID WITHDRAWAL SYNDROME:** Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (also called NOWS), refers to symptoms of withdrawal that babies may sometimes develop after birth if their mothers have taken medications or drugs during their pregnancy that can be addictive.

**CAUSE OF SYMPTOMS:** Many drugs used by mothers can reach the baby while they are in the womb. Once the baby is born, the baby can no longer receive the drug from their mother's body, and their own body may begin to react with symptoms known as withdrawal. There are many drugs that can cause this reaction, such as Opioids: Street drugs such as heroin and opium; Medications such as Vicodin, Percocet, Methadone, and Suboxone.

It is very important that the pregnant woman let the nurse and doctor know about any drugs used during pregnancy. This will help health care providers give appropriate medicines to the mother and baby. We cannot predict which babies will have NOWS. The amount of drugs or medicines that the baby receives in the womb does not always match the symptoms that each baby may have after they are born.

**WHEN SYMPTOMS OCCUR:** Most infants begin to have symptoms of withdrawal between 2-3 days after their birth. However, some infants may have them earlier and others may not have them until up to 10 days of age. These symptoms may be mild and go away quickly or may continue for months.

Some things that can affect how long it takes for symptoms to develop include:

- How long the medication or drug is active in the mother
- How recently the medication or drug was taken before the baby's birth
- Whether other medications or drugs were used at the same time

Tests that might be done to measure the presence of the drug in the baby's system include testing drug levels in the first stool (called meconium). Tests might also be done on a sample of the baby's urine.

## **SYMPTOMS OF NOWS:**

Some common withdrawal symptoms are:

- Irritability
- Jitteriness
- Frequent crying (may be high pitched)
- Vigorous sucking on a pacifier
- Sweating
- Diarrhea
- Stuffy nose
- Fever
- Difficulty feeding
- Trouble sleeping
- Fast breathing
- Vomiting
- Frequent yawning and sneezing
- Stiff arms, legs and back
- Seizures

Infants that have NOWS usually have several of the symptoms, not just one. Some of these are symptoms of other problems such as colds or infections.

**Alabama Department of Mental Health Provider Directory:**  
[mh.alabama.gov/providers-search](https://mh.alabama.gov/providers-search)



# RESOURCES:

## NEED SERVICES?

### **24/7 Substance Use Disorder Helpline:**

1-844-307-1760 • [mh.alabama.gov/substance-abuse-treatment-services](http://mh.alabama.gov/substance-abuse-treatment-services)

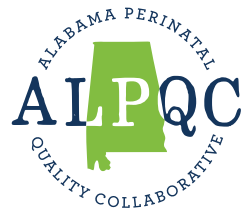
### **Alabama Department of Mental Health Provider Directory:**

[mh.alabama.gov/providers-search](http://mh.alabama.gov/providers-search)

### **Alabama Perinatal Quality Collaborative:**

[alpqc.org/resources](http://alpqc.org/resources)

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**Copies of this, as well as information regarding opiate use during pregnancy, can be downloaded for printing at [alabamapublichealth.gov/womenshealth](http://alabamapublichealth.gov/womenshealth).**