

Dear Parent(s),

Congratulations on the upcoming birth of your child! Our team at the Children's Hospital at Dartmouth (CHaD)/Dartmouth-Hitchcock (D-H) is committed to providing you and your baby with the best care possible. The information in this letter will help you learn how to best care for your baby and what you can expect during your time in the hospital. **This information is very important for you to read ahead of time so that you can be prepared to help your baby do the best possible.**

As you know, CHaD/D-H has a system to help care for babies who are exposed to buprenorphine during pregnancy. When a baby shows signs of withdrawal from this medicine, it is called Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). Signs of NAS typically start within 96 hours.

We are learning that babies do best when they are cared for in a calm, quiet place with their parents close by. On the Birthing Pavilion and Pediatrics Unit at CHaD/D-H, parents and babies can "room in" together in a private room. Research has shown that babies need less morphine treatment and can go home faster when their parents are there with them all of the time to provide comfort and a feeling of safety.

We will take the following steps to make sure your baby is as healthy as he or she can be:



1. After birth, your baby will stay with you in the **Birthing Pavilion** if he or she is born at 35 weeks or more and does not require intensive care for any reason.
2. Nurses and doctors will check your baby for signs of NAS every 3-4 hours.
3. We will monitor your baby in the Birthing Pavilion for *at least 4 days*.
4. If your baby needs treatment for NAS, he or she will be moved to the **Pediatrics Unit** to start morphine treatment as long as he or she does not need intensive care for any reason.
5. While on the Pediatrics Unit, you will be able to stay with your baby 24 hours a day in a private room while he or she receives treatment. Your baby may need treatment for **2 weeks or more** depending on how things go with weaning the morphine.
6. Once your baby is off of morphine and showing no signs of NAS, your baby is ready to go home!

During your baby's time in the hospital, you will be the primary caretaker for your baby. We will be here to help you, but we need you to help take care of your baby in the following ways:

➤ **Help comfort your baby in a calm setting**

Your baby will do the best in a calm, quiet room with you by his or her side.

- ❖ Keep your baby in your private room.
- ❖ Keep your baby close to you "skin to skin" when you are awake and not sleepy.
- ❖ Gently sway your baby.
- ❖ Talk to or sing to your baby.
- ❖ Feed your baby when hungry and until content (at least every 3 hours).
- ❖ Breastfeed your baby, unless told not to by a provider for medical reasons.
- ❖ Wrap your baby in a thin blanket keeping the top of the blanket below his or her chin.



➤ **Be with your baby 24/7**

Babies with NAS do not do as well when they are in bright, loud settings such as in our Nursery or at the Nurse's station.

- ❖ Stay with your baby in your private room at all times.
- ❖ If you cannot be there with your baby for any reason, have a friend or family member stay with your baby in your private room.
- ❖ Help us score your baby by watching for signs of NAS and writing down when your baby eats, pees, poops, sleeps, sneezes, yawns, or has other problems in your "Baby's Symptom Diary."
- ❖ We will be nearby to help you if you have any questions or concerns.

➤ **Make a plan to stay with your baby for as long as he or she needs to be in the hospital**

Your baby may need to be in the hospital for 2 weeks or more. It is very important that you are able to stay with your baby all of the time while he/she is in the hospital. Please try your best to find ways that you can stay with your baby this whole time.

- ❖ Bring enough clothes and personal items with you to last for 2 weeks or more.
- ❖ Plan to have someone watch your other children or your pets while you are away.
- ❖ Tell your family and your employer that you might need to be in the hospital for a couple of weeks.

We look forward to working with you in the coming weeks to help you and your baby have the best experience possible. We know that with your help, we can do our best to help care for your baby in the first few days and weeks of life!

If you have any questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact Dr. Bonny Whalen, a social worker or a nurse manager in the Birthing Pavilion at 603.650.7281.

Thank you for your time,
The Newborn Care Staff at CHaD / Dartmouth-Hitchcock