What is NAS and How Can Human Milk Help?

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) is a term for a group of conditions a baby experiences when withdrawing from exposure to certain drugs in utero.¹

What does NAS cause?
NAS increases risk of:
- Low birth weight
- Jaundice
- Admission to the newborn intensive care unit
- Medication to treat withdrawal symptoms

What causes NAS?
NAS most often is caused by drugs called opioids, specifically:
- Codeine
- Hydrocodone (name brand Vicodin)
- Morphine (name brands Kadian, Avinza)
- Oxycodone (name brands OxyContin, Percocet)
- Tramadol
- Methadone
- Heroin

Other prescription drugs that can cause NAS include:
- Antidepressants (used to treat depression)
- Benzodiazepines (sleeping pills)

What is the treatment recommendation for NAS?
Medically supervised withdrawal with Methadone, Buprenorphine for 5-30 days including:
- Swaddle baby (wrap snuggly in a blanket)
- Skin-to-skin care
- Quiet, dimly lit room
- Breast milk reduces the duration of NAS, symptom severity and the associated costs of treatment, in addition to conferring protection against the most common and costly conditions in infancy.² ³ ⁴ ⁵ ⁶ ⁷

What should I look for?
Signs and symptoms of NAS can be different for every baby. Most happen within three days (72 hours) of birth, but some may be evident right after birth or not until a few weeks after birth.
- Body shakes (tremors), seizures (convulsions), overactive reflexes (twitching) and tight muscle tone
- Fussiness, excessive crying or having a high-pitched cry
- Poor feeding or sucking or slow weight gain
- Breathing problems, including rapid breathing
- Fever, sweating or blotchy skin
- Trouble sleeping and lots of yawning
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Stuffy nose or sneezing

*Eighty-two percent of the time, the charges are paid by state Medicaid programs.⁴