

# Your Health Matters

## **ADDICTED BABIES**

The number of babies born addicted to opiates has tripled. Every 25 minutes, a baby is born suffering from opioid withdrawal. And did you know that Montgomery County ranked 9th in the counties in Missouri, where babies are born with neonatal abstinence syndrome.

Neonatal abstinence syndrome may occur when a pregnant woman takes drugs such as heroin, codeine, Oxycontin, methadone or buprenorphine. Sadly, a mother can pass along to her infant an addiction to medication, nicotine, or illegal drugs she takes while pregnant.

Making the infant dependent on the drugs, creates a group of problems for the infant. A newborn may have blotchy skin, diarrhea, excessive crying or sucking, a fever, rapid breathing, and weight problems. He may not feed well, and may be irritable. He may sweat, have seizures, or not sleep well. He may tremble or vomit.

Symptoms usually start within a few days of birth, but they can take up to a week to appear. They will vary depending on what type of drugs the mother used, how much she used, and how long she was using before the infant was born. Health care providers will carefully watch the newborn for up to a week after birth to make sure he is eating, sleeping, and gaining weight.

An infant with neonatal abstinence syndrome may need treatment for up to 6 months. Even after treatment, he may need extra care at home for several weeks. He may be more fussy and harder to calm than other babies. He may be more likely to get skin rashes or diaper rashes. He may grow more slowly than other babies.

To protect your baby from neonatal abstinence syndrome, take precautions before you get pregnant. Talk to your health care provider about all medication, drugs, alcohol or tobacco products you use. Ask your doctor for options on how to stop using products that will harm your baby if you become pregnant.

Infant care begins long before the baby is born. If you plan to become pregnant, start taking steps today to protect your baby! Make sure the things you pass on to your baby will help him grow up healthy!

The Montgomery County Health Department loves taking care of your family, and works every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. To learn more, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at [www.montgomerycountyhealth.org](http://www.montgomerycountyhealth.org) or on Facebook or Twitter @healthymoco. ■



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