

Advancing Neonatal Care: Implementing the Eat, Sleep, Console (ESC) Method for Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome



Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) is a broad term for withdrawal in newborns exposed to various substances.

Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS) specifically refers to withdrawal symptoms resulting from opioid exposure in utero.

THE ESCALATING IMPACT OF OPIOID USE ON MATERNAL AND NEONATAL HEALTH



- NAS/NOWS rates have increased by 82% from 2010 to 2017.
- Opioid-related overdoses are now a leading cause of death in pregnancy and the postpartum period.
- Substance use disorder in pregnancy is common, with significant mental health comorbidities and rising maternal mortality, especially from overdoses.

THE PROMISE OF THE EAT, SLEEP, CONSOLE (ESC) MODEL



- ESC focuses on functional abilities (eating, sleeping, consoling) and prioritizes non-pharmacological interventions.
- Family-centered care, on-demand feeding, and caregiver involvement are emphasized.
- Studies show ESC reduces length of stay, decreases medication use, and improves outcomes for both infants and families compared to traditional approaches.

CALL TO ACTION



- NOWS is associated with long hospitalizations and costly stays.
- There is a lack of standardized treatment approaches across the nation.
- Nonpharmacologic treatment should be our first-line approach.
- We can impact the health and welfare of our substance exposed newborns by taking action.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS ON NAS/NOWS TREATMENT:

(1) Provider Information on ESC Implementation

- [ESC Toolkit](#)
- [ESC Implementation Strategies](#)

(2) Academic & Policy Guidance on Maternal Child Substance Use Treatment

- [NOWS Treatment Guidelines and Birth Hospital Utilization](#)
- [2025 Maternal Mental Health State Report Cards](#)
- [Trauma Informed Care Resource](#)