



## Your Baby and Pain: Ways You Can Help Your Baby



Some medical care and procedures—giving heel sticks, inserting IV lines, receiving injections, removing tape, being on a ventilator, having surgery—can cause pain for your baby.

Bryan Neonatal Intensive Care Unit staff members do many things to help reduce your baby's pain, such as providing pain medication, sucrose and special positioning techniques. Your baby's nurse will use a tool called NPASS (Neonatal Pain, Agitation and Sedation Scale) to help gauge your baby's pain level. Even so, we know that it can be hard to see your baby in pain.

Here are ways you can help comfort your baby.

As a parent, one of the most important things you can do is learn common signals that babies give when they are not comfortable. If you notice the signals that follow, tell your baby's nurse.

- Changes in heart rate and breathing patterns
- Changes in oxygen levels when touched or handled
- Moving away or waving arms and legs
- "Pained" facial expressions (grimace, frown or worried look)
- Crying
- Changes in coloring
- Body stiffness
- Tightly fisted hands and feet
- Not getting enough "deep" sleep

In addition to medications, the activities below might ease pain or provide comfort. Talk to your baby's nurse to see if they are right for your baby and what might work best.

- Swaddling (being wrapped snug in a blanket)
- Facilitated tucking (or containment) by using your hands to cradle your baby in a fetal position
- Giving your baby a pacifier
- Talking softly to your baby
- Touching your baby or providing skin-to-skin (kangaroo) care
- Keeping lights and noise levels down to create a dark, quiet and calm environment
- Placing small drop of sucrose (or sugar solution) or a few drops of breast milk onto your baby's tongue

Sometimes, babies in discomfort like to be left alone, as the stimulation is too much for them. It still is important for you to be present—even if just sitting with or gently talking to your baby. Some babies who have been on pain medications for a long time (at least 5 days) may need to be weaned slowly because taking away medications too fast may be harmful. This does not mean your baby is addicted to the medicine, only that his or her body has gotten used to it. Talk to your baby's nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

Keep in mind that managing your baby's pain is a high priority for us. We recognize that you know your baby best and that you can be a great source of comfort to your baby.

*This information is provided for educational and informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice and treatment or consultation with qualified doctors and other healthcare professionals regarding your individual needs. The March of Dimes® is not engaged in rendering medical advice or recommendations. "Your Baby and Pain: Ways to Help Your Baby" was developed by the S.C. Chapter of the March of Dimes in partnership with Children's Hospital of Greenville Health System.*