

Special Needs Overview

While the birth of a new life is often associated with joy and excitement, it is nevertheless an extremely difficult and confusing transition for any newborn. Psychology professionals are now even beginning to refer to all birth as "the birth trauma."

When this inherently difficult experience is compounded by the withdrawal of addictive substances transferred to the fetus in utero, there is typically tremendous suffering endured by these precious new arrivals. Understanding these special issues can help caregivers create a supportive healing environment.

Anyone who has ever experienced the overwhelming full-body impact of a migraine can begin to understand the agony of a withdrawing newborn. In addition to extreme physical pain and suffering, these infants are typically hyper-sensitive to light, noise and touch, in addition to often being hyper-sensitive to agitation or disharmony in their caregivers.

By following some general tips found in this brochure, you can help the newborn make the necessary adjustments for healing.

Acupressure Points

Acupressure is an ancient Asian healing system that uses similar points as acupuncture. Rather than using needles, it uses soft, gentle touch to help stimulate the body's natural ability to heal itself. Acupressure treatments can be administered by anyone with an intention of healing. Following are some Acupressure points that can be held lightly for a few minutes each, to help stimulate the infant's natural healing system.

If the infant becomes irritable, it might be better to try again at another time. The most important thing to remember is to hold a compassionate intention of healing.

- Lightly touch points, don't press.
- Work with any or all of the points.
- Do points on left first, then right.

Lung Meridian:

Breath of life, clearing, letting go
Lung 1: On chest, at outer edge of clavicle (directly below ear)
Lung 11: Inside tip of thumb, next to thumbnail

Bladder Meridian:

Clears toxins, balances entire body
Bladder 10: Next to vertebrae at base of skull, head meets neck
Bladder 67: Outer side of toenail of pinky toe

Pericardium Meridian:

Protects the heart from trauma
Pericardium 7: Middle of wrist crease, underside of wrist
Pericardium 9: Tip of the middle finger

Stomach Meridian:

Harmonizes digestion, provides nourishment
Stomach 36: Below kneecap, slightly outer side (above tibia head)
Stomach 45: Next to toenail of second toe, outer side (first toe=big toe)

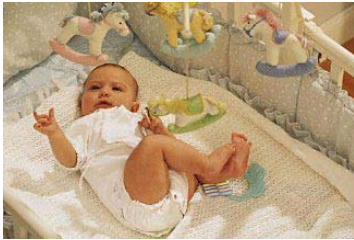
The Special Needs of Newborns in Withdrawal



A Caregiver's Guide for: -NICU Nurses & Staff -Parents & Family Members -Foster Parents

Prepared by:
Mary Destri
Energy Based Massage Therapist
Shiatsu, Reiki, Jin Shin Jyutsu
mdestri@earthlink.net

Visual Needs



Anyone who has endured a migraine understands the need for a dark, quiet place to weather the storm; withdrawing infants similarly require this soft, quiet environment to survive their storm.

Bright sunlight, bright lightbulbs, and even bright colors can hurt their sensitive eyes. Shielding their eyes from bright lights and filling the nursery with soft, nurturing pastel colors, and "soft-white" lightbulbs can help tremendously.

Minimize:

- Bright sunlight
- Bright indoor lighting
- Bright colors

Maximize:

- Eye shielding in bright daylight
- Low-wattage, "soft-white" lighting
- Soft, pastel colors

Audio Needs



Infants in withdrawal are often so hyper-sensitive to noise that someone speaking in their normal volume next to them will startle them as if someone had shouted into a bullhorn. The slightest sound is amplified greatly to them. It's as if the stereo is set to level 3, but they hear it at level 10.

On the other hand, the right sound at the right level can be extremely comforting to them; soft lullabies, meditation music and soft classical music, such as the CD "Mozart at Midnight," can provide them with the healing energy they need.

Minimize:

- Loud noises
- Speaking at normal/loud volume
- Music at normal/loud volume

Maximize:

- White noise machine
- Soft voice, soft humming
- Nursery music at low volume

Touch Needs



Caregivers of withdrawing infants often notice that the infants are sometimes irritable when touched. At times, it may seem that any touch for an infant in the throes of withdrawal is too much; however, staying mindful of the quality of touch rendered can help reduce the irritability of the infant.

The softer and the more gentle the touch, the more receptive the infant is likely to be. Interestingly enough, these infants are so sensitive, they often seem to "pick up on" and in fact, "pick up" any agitated or anxious energy in the caregiver.

Minimize:

- Quick movements or harsh touch
- Hard plastic or wooden toys
- Synthetic fibers in clothing or bedding

Maximize:

- Gentle touch
- Cotton toys, small stuffed animals
- Soft organic cotton fabrics