



Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome



Background

Maternal drug use has increased significantly in the past decade leading to a rise in the number of newborns diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). These babies experience signs of drug withdrawal and require special treatment prior to leaving the hospital.

What is Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)?

NAS is a postnatal drug withdrawal syndrome caused by maternal drug use, primarily prescription opiate abuse. Infants are diagnosed with NAS shortly after birth based on a history of drug exposure, lab testing (maternal drug screen or infant testing of urine, meconium, hair, or umbilical samples), and clinical signs (symptom rating scale). Symptoms may include increased irritability, feeding problems, watery stools, increased muscle tone, tremors, seizures, and/or breathing problems shortly after birth.

How NAS is clinically treated?

Infants with NAS may be treated pharmacologically and/or environmentally (e.g. decrease environmental stimulation) based on the severity of the syndrome. The average hospital stay for newborns with NAS is 16 days, as opposed to 3 days for all other US births, and has not declined during the last decade.

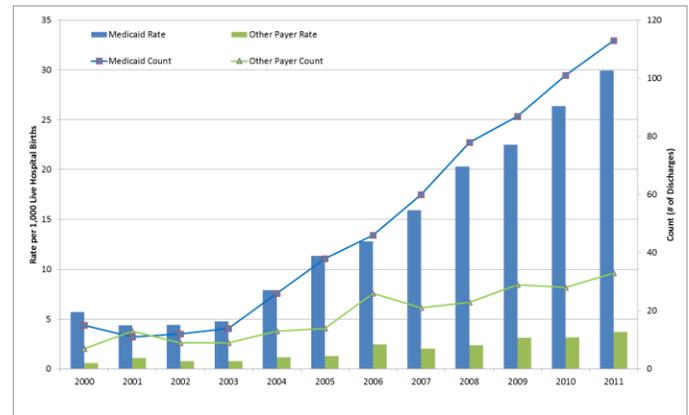
How widespread is this problem?

New Hampshire is not the only state that has seen an increase in NAS over the last decade. NAS has increased at an alarming rate on a national level. Some researchers have suggested that NAS has reached epidemic proportions in the United States in recent years.

Populations at risk for NAS

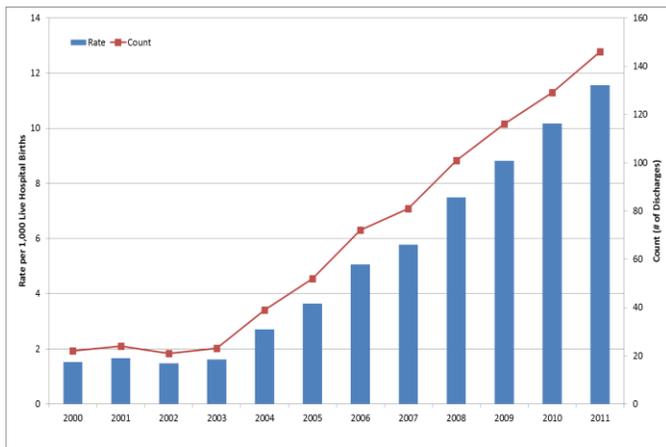
NAS affects all races, ethnic groups, and socio-economic levels. However, Medicaid enrolled patients are disproportionately affected, representing over three quarters of the infants diagnosed with NAS.

**Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
NH Infant Discharges by Payer 2000-2011**



Data Source: Inpatient Hospital Discharge Data

**Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
NH Infant Discharges 2000-2011**



For more information contact:

NH Department of Health and Human Services,
MCH, Prenatal Program

<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/mch/index.htm>
or (603) 271-4517

For more information on Drug Treatment and
Prevention contact:

NH Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services
<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bdas/contact.htm>
or (603) 271-6110