Newborn Drug Classifications,
Symptoms and Treatments

1. Opiates and Opioids:

Heroine, Methadone, OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin

• Opiates are depressant drugs derived from opium while opioids are synthetic drugs that are made to act like opiates.

• Sudden withdrawal from opiates can cause severe reactions.

Symptoms:

• high pitched cry
• frantic movements
• tremors
• sweating
• fast respiration and heart rate
• inability to sleep and relax
• sensitivity to stimuli
• disorganized suck
• abdominal cramps
• loose stools
• bloody diarrhea

Symptoms from opiates will generally appear within 24 hours as it is fast acting. Methadone, a treatment drug is more long-lasting and may mask symptoms for up to 72 hours.

Treatments:

• tremors are the most common symptom and so swaddling will calm the newborn as their body is being controlled for them

• infant will most likely be on a prescribed dosage of oral morphine to ease the pain of withdrawal. constant monitoring is necessary for any baby on morphine as heart and respiration rates will both slow

2. Stimulants:

Cocaine, Methamphetamines, Amphetamines, Tobacco

• These drugs are all "uppers," which increase energy output but decrease appetite. This can lead to feeding issues and a failure to thrive or grow.

• A baby on stimulants may appear healthy and content but their natural hunger trigger in their brain seems to have been turned off.

These babies will not have the violent jerking of an opioid baby and may therefore be looked at as being just a "good baby." There needs for food and nourishment need to be awakened internally.

Symptoms:

- inability to eat
- low birth weight
- limp tone
- excoriated areas on their skin (meth)
- prematurity (cocaine)

Treatments:

- Low birth weight and the lack of crying out for hunger needs to be met with regular feedings, even if the baby appears to be content. This is not just a "good baby," but a baby who needs to learn to cry out for food.
- Frequent attempts at feeding will be necessary.
- Careful monitoring of baby's growth

3. Psychotropics:

Antipsychotics, Antidepressants, Tranquilizers
- A psychotropic drug is any prescribed drug that is used to treat psychiatric disorders.
- These drugs build up a level over time and also gradually leave the system.
- Symptoms of psychotropic drugs will not show up until about three weeks after birth

Symptoms:

- irritability
- inability to sleep or relax
- extreme sensitivity to stimuli
- difficulty feeding

Treatments:

- Babies that are progressing through withdrawals that suddenly become irritable or very sensitive to external stimuli need to be investigated for psychotropic drug exposure.
- These symptoms will almost always show up at three weeks after birth.
- Decreasing sensory stimuli will help these infants. No overhead lighting, loud noises, even strong perfumes can overstimulate them.

4. Multiple-Drug Exposure:

- Most babies have been exposed to multiple drugs prenatally. This can be difficult as one drug may mask the symptoms of another one.
- It is common for a baby to have been exposed to an average of seven drugs. Moms often take whatever drug is available to them and this can make diagnosis challenging.

Treatment:

     • It is a good idea to look for symptoms and signs of opioid exposure first and treat for these. You may find that other problems also are identified, like feeding issues or sensitivity to stimulus.

     • Make sure the baby receives adequate nutrition to grow and thrive.

5. Other drugs:

     Hallucinogens (marijuana, LSD, PCP, peyote, mushrooms)

     Inhalants (glue, nail polish remover, spray paint, gasoline)

     Depressants (alcohol, barbiturates, tranquilizers, qualudes)

These drugs are not typically associated with prenatal drug exposure as their impact is short-lived in the bloodstream. However, they can cause moderate to severe brain damage which may be evident in a mom who has a baby in for treatment from other drug exposure. There is also a high risk of low-birth weight from these drugs as well. As stated before, rarely is a baby exposed to any singular drug.