



Medications at Home: Phenobarbital (NAS)

The neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) team celebrates with you as your baby goes home! After graduation from the NICU, your baby will need medication to stay well.

Why does my baby need this medication?

- Phenobarbital is sometimes used to help with withdrawal symptoms in babies exposed to illegal drugs while in utero.
- Phenobarbital helps to relieve some of the symptoms of stiffness, tremors, and agitation.

How, how much, and when is this medication given to my baby?

- Phenobarbital is a liquid and will be given in the baby's mouth.
- Wash and dry your hands before giving your baby this medicine.
- Using a children's measuring device, available at a pharmacy, give the exact dose the doctor ordered for your baby.
- Administer the medicine using a syringe and slowly drip it into the inside of the baby's cheek or mix it in 5–10 ml of milk and have the baby suck it out of a bottle.
- Make sure the baby has swallowed/taken the entire dose.
- The amount of medicine has been carefully calculated based on your baby's weight and needed response from the medicine. Do not change the dosage without talking to your baby's provider.
- Dose Instructions: _____

What are possible side effects?

- Sleepiness
- Slow breathing
- Trouble sleeping
- Skin rash

Call your baby's provider right away if your baby has

- skin rash—do not give the medicine if a rash develops.

Call 911 if your baby has

- trouble breathing or swelling of the hands, feet, ankles, or tongue.

What if my baby misses a dose?

- Give the missed dose as soon as you remember it, if it is within an hour of the missed dose, and stick to the regular medication schedule.
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and stick to the regular medication schedule.
- **Never** give a double dose.
- Call your baby's provider if your baby misses two or more doses.

Important Medication Safety Tips

- Only give your baby medicine prescribed by your baby's provider. Do not share prescription medicines with other children or adults.
- Check with your baby's provider before giving your baby any over-the-counter medicines.
- Keep all medicines out of reach of children, closed tightly in the bottles or containers they came in, and with the labels of directions given by the pharmacy.
 - Light and moisture can make the medicine not work properly.
 - Keep bottle tightly sealed in a dark, dry place at room temperature.
- Phenobarbital is a controlled substance, which means it has dangerous side effects if used improperly.
- Give phenobarbital exactly as directed by your baby's provider.



- Never stop phenobarbital or give more or less than prescribed without first talking with your baby’s provider. Too little may not be enough to help, and too much may cause harm. In the case of an overdose, immediately call the Poison Control Center at 800.222.1222. If you cannot wake your baby or he or she has stopped breathing, start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and call your local emergency medical services (EMS) or 911 right away.
- If your baby has severe difficulty breathing or stops breathing, start CPR and call your local EMS or 911 right away.
- Always use the five *rights* when giving medication to your baby:
 - Right baby (if other children are in the home)
 - Right medication
 - Right amount (always measure the dose with the syringe or dropper provided by the pharmacy, not a common household teaspoon)
 - Right time
 - Right way (exactly as prescribed and directed by your baby’s provider).
- When the baby no longer needs the medicine, mix any leftover medicine with an unwanted material like cat litter or coffee grounds. Place the mixture into a container or bag that will not leak and throw it in the trash where children and pets cannot reach it.

The above information is to help you better understand your baby’s care. Always follow the instructions given by your baby’s provider and pharmacist. It’s always OK to ask questions if you have concerns about your baby.

Online Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

HealthFinder.gov
www.healthfinder.gov

Institute for Safe Medication Practices
www.consumermedsafety.org

Kids Health
www.kidshealth.org

Medline Plus: Drug Information
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/meds

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
www.fda.gov