

methadone program; breastfeeding promotes mother–infant bonding, and small quantities of methadone passed through breast milk have not proven to be harmful.

The Neonatal Abstinence Scoring System was developed to monitor infants in an objective manner and evaluate their response to clinical and pharmacologic interventions ([Finnegan, 1985](#)). This system is also designed to assist nurses and other health care workers in evaluating the severity of infants' withdrawal symptoms. Another tool that may be used to evaluate withdrawal behavior and treatment in newborns is the Neonatal Withdrawal Inventory developed by [Zahorodny, Rom, Whitney, and others \(1998\)](#).

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Network Neurobehavioral Scale (NNNS) is a comprehensive neurologic and behavioral assessment tool that may be used to identify newborns at risk as a result of intrauterine drug exposure. The tool measures stress or abstinence, state, neurologic status, and muscle tone in the context of the newborn's medical condition at the time of examination. The NNNS may be used for medically stable newborns who are at least 30 weeks of gestation and up to 48 weeks of corrected or conceptional age ([Lester, Tronick, and Brazelton, 2004](#)).

Loose stools, poor intake, and regurgitation after feeding predispose these infants to malnutrition, dehydration, skin breakdown, and electrolyte imbalance. In addition, these infants burn up energy with continual activity and increased oxygen consumption at the cellular level. Frequent weighing, careful monitoring of intake and output and electrolytes, and additional caloric supplementation may be necessary. Hyperactive infants must be protected from skin abrasions on the knees, toes, and cheeks that are caused by rubbing on bed linens while in a prone position (awake). Monitoring and recording the activity level and its relationship to other activities, such as feeding and preventing complications, are important nursing functions.

A valuable aid to anticipating problems in the newborn is recognizing substance abuse in the mother. Unless the mother is enrolled in a methadone rehabilitation program, she seldom risks calling attention to her habit by seeking prenatal care. Consequently, infants and mothers are exposed to the additional hazards of obstetric and medical complications. Moreover, the