

# Eat, Sleep and Console (ESC)

## Site Applicability

PHC: St Paul's Hospital Pregnancy, Birthing and Newborn Centre (PBNC) and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

## Practice Level

**Specialized:** Registered Nurses (RN) with advanced skills – specialized education NICU and/or Perinatal Registered Midwives (RM)  
Physicians with birthing unit privileges

## Requirements

PHC Health Care Professionals (HCPs) working in perinatal and NICU settings and caring for infants exposed to substances will refer to the Perinatal Services BC (PSBC, 2020) practice resource "Care of the Newborn Exposed to Substances during Pregnancy" (see link in procedure section) when providing care to infants born to birthing persons who use substances during pregnancy. This guideline provides guidance for HCPs in the implementation of the Eat, Sleep and Console (ESC) model of care.

- RNs require a physician's order to use the ESC model of care in assessing and supporting infants experiencing neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) or at risk of experiencing withdrawal from substances.
- A team model of nursing care, with collaboration between the perinatal RN and the NICU RN, is required when the infant is rooming-in with the birthing person on the PBNC unit.
- It is strongly recommended that all HCPs working in NICU and/or perinatal settings complete the UBC CPD "Perinatal Substance Use" eLearning modules available at <https://ubccpd.ca/learn/learning-activities/course?eventtemplate=41>

## Need to Know

ESC is a validated, evidence-based approach for assessing and supporting infants at risk of withdrawal from substances or infants experiencing neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), and is an alternative to the Finnegan Score scale. ESC is a patient-centered, trauma-informed and culturally safe approach used to support infants exposed primarily to opioids, but also to other substances during pregnancy. Thus, the ESC model of care, and its associated non-pharmacological interventions, may also be used when infants have been exposed to other substances (e.g. stimulants, antidepressants, benzodiazepines etc.). ESC is a provincial initiative that is being implemented provincially as a part of the [Provincial Perinatal Substance Use Project](#).

Exposure to substances alone is not a reason for the infant to be admitted to the NICU. If no medical or safety concerns exist, the infant should remain with the birthing person, rooming-in. The dyad should be

supported through a family-centered approach, whereby the perinatal RN and the NICU RN work together to support bonding and attachment of the dyad and promote family togetherness, skin-to-skin contact, and breastfeeding (unless contraindicated). For more information refer [to Family-Baby Togetherness](#).

The ESC model is a functional assessment which evaluates three categories as defined by Grossman et al. (2017):

- Eating – Poor eating due to substance withdrawal?
- Sleeping – Sleep less than 1 hour due to substance withdrawal?
- Consoling – Unable to console within 10 minutes and/or stay consoled for longer than 10 minutes due to substance withdrawal?

ESC assessments and non-pharmacological interventions should be initiated within 4 to 6 hours after birth and should be done after feedings, preferably with the infant positioned skin-to-skin or held by the parent/caregiver (*the parent/caregiver must be awake when doing skin-to-skin or holding the infant*). The ESC assessment should be reviewed with the parents every 2 to 4 hours thereafter. For infants who require pharmacological management in addition to the non-pharmacological interventions, ESC assessments should continue for a minimum of 24 hours after the last administered dose of morphine (Perinatal Services BC, 2020).

RNs should provide parents/caregivers with education and coaching to build competence and confidence in the parent and/or caregiver's ability to care for the infant, and foster a trusting nurse-patient relationship (Tilberg, 2019). The ESC approach (PSBC, 2020) maximizes non-pharmacological care interventions such as:

- Rooming-in
- Parent and/or caregiver presence
- Cue based feeding and newborn-centered care
- Skin-to-skin contact
- Breastfeeding (unless contraindicated)
- Non-nutritive sucking (e.g. pacifier, gloved HCP finger)
- Quiet, low lit environment
- Protecting sleep (not waking infants for unnecessary assessments and/or procedures)
- Vertical Rocking
- Rhythmic swaying or rocking movements
- Talking to infant with a soft, calm voice
- Gentle but firm tactile stimulation (avoid stroking)
- Safe swaddling (discontinue swaddling prior to discharge from hospital or when NAS symptoms have resolved)
- Additional support and respite for parent and/or caregiver
- Parent/caregiver rest & self-care

The perinatal and/or NICU RN will refer to the PSBC practice resource, ESC Care Tool, and the provincial rooming-in guideline when working with infants who are at risk for or experiencing NAS.

## Guideline

Follow the PSBC and BC Women's Hospital practice resource, care tool and guideline below:

- 1) [Care of the Newborn Exposed to Substances during Pregnancy](#)
- 2) [Rooming-In Guideline for Perinatal Women Using Substances](#)
- 3) [Eating, Sleeping, Consoling \(ESC\) Care Tool](#)

## Documentation

Document in Cerner PowerChart:

Interactive View and I&O → Newborn Systems Assessment → Eat Sleep Console Assessment

## References

BC Women's Hospital & Provincial Health Services Authority (2020). *Provincial Rooming in Guideline for Perinatal Women Using Substances*. [Microsoft Word - Provincial Rooming-in Guideline 22Oct2020 Final \(bcwomens.ca\)](#)

Grossman, M. R., Berkowitz, A. K., Osborn, R. R., Xu, Y., Esserman, D. A., Shapiro, E. D., & Bizzarro, M. J. (2017). An Initiative to Improve the Quality of Care of Infants With Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. *Pediatrics*, 139(6), e20163360. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-3360>

Perinatal Services BC. (November, 2020). *Care of the Newborn Exposed to Substances During Pregnancy: Instructional Manual*. Vancouver, BC.

Perinatal Services BC. (2020) *Eating, Sleeping, Consoling (ESC) Care Tool*. [Eating Sleeping Consoling ESC Care Tool.pdf \(perinatalservicesbc.ca\)](#)

Tilberg, Amber D., "Implementing the Eat, Sleep, Console Approach for NAS Management: Review of Literature" (2019). Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Practice Innovation Projects. 125. [https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/con\\_dnp/125](https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/con_dnp/125)

## Related Documents

1. [B-00-07-10016](#) - Family Baby Togetherness
2. [BD-00-11-40027](#) - Infant Feeding (Breastfeeding/Chestfeeding)

**Persons/Groups Consulted**

Maternity Safety Quality Council

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