

Neonatal Infant Pain Scale (NIPS)

We care about your child's comfort. You know your child best. We want to partner with you to help control your child's pain. If you have questions or concerns, please let your child's nurse know. While we may not be able to totally get rid of all your child's pain, we can reduce it.

Pain Assessment

The first step is to assess your child's pain using pain scales. The type of scale we use is based on your child's age, ability to communicate and preference. The pain scale you choose is used the whole time your child is in the hospital, unless your child's condition changes.

Goals

We work with you to come up with a goal for pain control.

Making a Plan

We will use medicine and non-drug methods to control your child's pain. We will ask you what has worked before to control your child's pain and put that into your child's plan of care, if we are able to. We will also teach you about other methods for pain control. Often, medicine combined with other comfort methods will give the best pain relief.

If you think your child needs pain medicine, please let your child's nurse know. In the hospital, a doctor must order pain medicine before a nurse can give it to a patient. Your child's nurse works with you to decide what is needed. In clinic, your child's doctor or nurse talks with you about a pain medicine plan.

What You Can Do

You can use some simple methods to comfort and distract your child if they seem to be in pain.

- Repositioning
- Singing or soft music
- Gentle stroking
- Rocking with your child in a rocking chair
- Swaddling
- Holding a comfort item or blanket
- Watching a movie
- Reading a book
- Other things you do at home to comfort your child

Ask about our non-drug pain control options for kids. The nurse, nursing assistant or child life specialist can help you choose the best tools and show you how to use them.

Neonatal Infant Pain Scale (NIPS)

At the American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH), the NIPS is used in children less than one year of age. Children at this age are not able to tell us if they are in pain. This scale uses body language to help us to figure out if a child is in pain. A child is given a score of 0 or 1 in each category based on their behavior. A total score is calculated. Most of the time a score greater than 3 tells us a child is likely having pain or discomfort.

Neonatal/Infant Pain Scale (NIPS)

(Recommended for children less than 1 year old) A score greater than 3 indicates pain.

Pain Assessment		Score
Facial Expression		
0 - Relaxed Muscles	Restful face, neutral expression	
1 - Grimace	Tight facial muscles; furrowed brow, chin, jaw (negative facial expression – nose, mouth, brow)	
Cry		
0 - No cry	Quiet, not crying	
1 - Whimper	Mild moaning, intermittent	
2 - Vigorous cry	Loud scream; rising, shrill, continuous (Note: Silent cry may be scored if baby is intubated as evidenced by obvious mouth and facial movement)	
Breathing Pattern		
0 - Relaxed	Usual pattern for this infant	
1 - Change in breathing	Indrawing, irregular, faster than usual; gagging, breath holding	
Arms		
0 - Relaxed/Restrained	No Muscular rigidity; occasional random movements of arms	
1 - Flexed/Extended	Tense, straight arms; rigid and/or rapid extension, flexion	
Legs		
0 - Relaxed/Restrained	No Muscular rigidity; occasional random movements of legs	
1 - Flexed/Extended	Tense, straight legs; rigid and/or rapid extension, flexion	
State of Arousal		
0 - Sleeping/Awake	Quiet, peaceful, sleeping or alert, random leg movements	
1 - Fussy	Alert, restless and thrashing	

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2021 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7711